

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

About the author

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Warren & Maureen Paynter

Introduction

There are many ways in which Bible scholars approach the book of The Revelation:-

1. Most approach it with the view that it is not to be taken literally at all. Everything has some hidden meaning, with the result that there is a great diversity of opinion as to what the book is all about.
2. The historical school regards the book as being largely fulfilled. The history of the Church from its founding is regarded as being unfolded step by step in The Revelation.
3. Others regard the book as being incomprehensible and that it is impossible to arrive at any understanding of the mysteries that it contains. Of all the books of the New Testament, it is the only one on which John Calvin wrote no commentary.
4. Finally, there are those who regard the book as literal, and that most of it is prophetic, awaiting fulfillment at some future date. Unlike Daniel, who was told to

“shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end” (Dan 12:4).

John is commanded,

“Seal not the sayings of the prophecies of this book; for the time is at hand”
(Rev 22:10).

5. The approach to the interpretation of the book of The Revelation presented here will be:
 - a) The book of The Revelation is literal, and most of it deals with future events. God intended us to understand that what is described in it is to be understood in its primary, literal sense.
 - b) In such places where figurative language is used, the text itself will contain the literal interpretation, so that there need be no “private interpretation” (2 Pet 1:20). Where the figurative language cannot be discerned from the immediate text, we are to consult the other books of the Bible, which will shed light on the meaning. For example, in Rev 12:1, the woman clothed with the sun and moon and the twelve stars is obviously Israel, and not the Church, in the light of Joseph’s dream, as recorded in Gen 37:9-10.
 - c) There is a time sequence in the book. This is particularly so with regard to the events which take place from Chapter 8 onwards.

- d) Not all of the book is revelatory. There is that which is known without the need for special revelation. The content of the book of The Revelation which is hidden, is that which is contained in the seven-sealed scroll. Everything, which is recorded from the first verse up to and including the breaking of the seventh seal, is of a non-revelatory nature. That which was given on the seven-sealed scroll by the Lamb to His servant, John, commences from Rev 8:2. From this point there is an unfolding of the wrath of God which increases with the passage of time. The Day of Wrath is first recognised as commencing with the breaking of the sixth seal. It is at this point that wrath is mentioned for the first time, where the inhabitants of the earth cry out that the Great Day of the Wrath of God and of the Lamb has come (Rev 6:16-17). From this point onwards, the two Greek words for “wrath” occur sixteen times. The first word, “orgee”, occurs six times, in Rev 6:16, 17 and in Rev 11:18, 14:10, 16:19, 19:15, being translated “wrath” in all these places excepting Rev 14:10, where it is translated, “indignation”. The other Greek word for “wrath”, “thumos”, occurs ten times in Rev 12:12, 14:8, 10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1; 18:3, where it is translated “wrath”, and 16:19 and 19:15, where it is translated “fierceness”. Both these later passages contain both these Greek words, and they are rendered the “fierceness of his wrath” and the “fierceness and wrath of Almighty God”.
- e) In considering the book of The Revelation, we will therefore divide it into its two main sections of non-revelatory and revelatory.

A. Non-Revelatory Portion of the Revelation (Rev 1:1-8:1)

Chapter 1

The head of the Church, the glorified, ascended Christ

Chapters 2 and 3

The seven-fold Church on earth – the Body of Christ

Chapter 4

God’s Rainbow Throne

Chapter 5

The Lamb and the seven-sealed scroll

Chapter 6:1-11

1. The four horsemen
2. The martyred saints beneath the altar

Chapter 6:12 – Chapter 7:17

1. Great signs and wonders

2. Advent of the Day of Wrath
3. The sealing of the 144 000
4. The great multitude before the Throne

Chapter 8:1

The seventh seal – silence in Heaven

B. Revelatory Portion of the Revelation (Rev 8:2 - 22:21)

This is the portion written on the seven-sealed scroll, which Christ now reveals to His servants.

The First Half of the Day of Wrath (Rev 8:2 – 11:14)

This covers a period of 1 260 days.

1. **Celestial Visitations (Rev 8:2-12)**
 - a) The first trumpet – hail and fire
 - b) The second trumpet – great mountain burning with fire
 - c) The third trumpet – great star from Heaven
 - d) The fourth trumpet – third part of sun, moon and stars darkened
2. **Intraterrestrial Visitations (Rev 9:1-21)**
 - a) The first woe – the abyss opened
 - b) The second woe – one-third of men killed
3. **Chapter 10:1-11 – The Little Scroll – Wrath to continue**
4. **Chapter 11:1-14 – Two witnesses dominate preceding period of 1 260 days**

The Second Half of the Day of Wrath (Rev 11:15 – 19:21)

This period is commonly known as The Great Tribulation or the Time of Jacob's Trouble.

1. **Chapter 11:15-19 – Saints judged in heaven, sinners on earth**
2. **Chapter 12:1-17 – Satan cast down, Israel flees into wilderness**
3. **Chapter 13 – Two beasts dominate following 1 260 days**
4. **Chapter 14:1-20 – 144 000 in heaven, 3 angels sent to witness gathering of the harvest of the earth**

5. Chapter 15 – Tribulation martyrs stand on sea of glass mingled with fire, 7 angels prepare to pour out 7 last plagues
6. Chapter 16:1-21 – 7 vials of wrath poured out on mankind
7. Chapter 17:1-18 – Judgment of Babylon the Great
8. Chapter 18:1-24 – Completion of the Judgment of Babylon
9. Chapter 19:1-21 – Marriage supper of the Lamb, Battle of Armageddon

C. The Millennial Reign of Christ (Rev 20 - 22)

1. Satan Bound (Rev 1 – 3)
2. Tribulation Saints Resurrected (Rev 4 – 6)
3. Satan Loosed (Rev 7 – 10)
4. The Final Judgment, the Great White Throne (Rev 11 – 15)

D. The New Heavens and the New Earth (Rev 21:1 – 22:21)

1. The New Jerusalem
2. The Open Invitation

A. Non-Revelatory Portion of the Revelation (Rev 1:1-8:1)

Chapter 1

The head of the Church, the glorified, ascended Christ

In view of the fact that we are primarily interested in the prophetic portion of the book of The Revelation, the section from Chapter 1 to the end of Chapter 5 will not be dealt with at length. Chapters 6 and 7, which belong to the first non-revelatory portion, will be dealt with in detail, as it deals with what Jesus called “the beginning of sorrows” (Mt 24:8; see also Mk 13:8). In the first verse of The Revelation, we are told that God (The Father) gave The Revelation to Jesus Christ with the intent that John, who received it through the mediatorship of an angel, might make known

“unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass” (Rev 1:1).

All that is recorded in the book up until Chapter 8:1 unfolds in the course of events and does not constitute a special revelation. That which is unknown, and which is to be revealed after the seventh seal is broken, is recorded on the scroll. It is this portion of the book which can only be known by means of special revelation.

There is a three-fold blessing pronounced on those who:

1. Read
2. Hear
3. Keep

these things which are written. This, of course, does not involve superficial reading and hearing of the book. We are reminded of the words of the Lord Jesus, who said, “whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock” (Mt 7:24-25).

The apostle, John, addressing the seven churches, pronounces grace and peace upon them from the Father, the Holy Spirit and from Jesus Christ, whom he declares to be:

1. The faithful witness
2. The first begotten of the dead; in other words, the first to rise with resurrection body.
3. The prince of the kings of the earth. His lordship over all mankind is here made evident, for He is truly

“KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev 19:16).

John then records the following concerning the relationship of the Lord Jesus towards us:

1. He loves us. (Not “He loved us”, for that can imply a past fact, which is not a present reality.)
2. He washes (looses) us from our sins in His own blood.
3. He makes us kings and priests unto God and His Father. John then records the following promise concerning His coming again in glory,

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.” (Rev 1:7)

The apostle, John, records the fact that he was on the isle of Patmos, in exile, due to the fact of the persecution taking place at that time under Diocletion, the last of the Flavian emperors. He records the fact that he was in the spirit of the Lord’s Day, and is called upon to record all that he sees on the scroll, which is to be sent to the seven churches in Asia. The Lord’s Day here is obviously the first day of the week, which, from the very first, was observed by the early church as the day of worship. The Sabbath pertains to the old creation and we, who are in Christ, are no longer part of the Adamic creation, but belong to the new creation.

John, turning to see who is speaking to him, sees the Lord Jesus Christ. The description of the ascended Christ, as recorded in the following verses, depicts Him in His glory and not as John once knew Him in the flesh, as “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”(Is 53:3). He still bears His earthly form of man, but it is now the perfect man in a resurrection body with the glory of God upon Him. John writes,

“and in the midst of the seven candlesticks (lampstands) one like unto the Son of man” (Rev 1:13)

whose person he describes as follows:

1. He is clothed with a garment down to the foot with a golden girdle around His breast.
2. His head and hair are white like wool, as white as snow. The whiteness is indicative, not of age, but of purity, and we see His likeness to the Ancient of Days as described in Dan 7:9.
3. His eyes are as a flame of fire. We are reminded that

“all things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to deal” (Heb 4:13).

4. His feet are like unto fine brass, as if they had burned in a furnace. These feet will shortly trample upon the vine of the earth when it is cast into the

“great winepress of the wrath of God” (Rev 15:19).

5. His voice is as the sound of many waters. The awesome roar of many waters is a deafening sound in the ears of all who hear.

6. In His right hand He holds the seven stars.

7. Out of His mouth there proceeds a sharp two edged sword. Coming with the armies of Heaven, we see Him at the battle of Armageddon,

“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations” (Rev 19:15).

8. His face is like the sun, shining in its full strength. We read Paul’s description of his encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus in his address to King Agrippa in Acts 26:13:

“At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.”

How truly the Lord has said, in speaking to Moses,

“Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.”

The apostles, Paul and John, did not see His full glory, for neither could have seen it and lived. Paul was blinded by what he saw, and John “fell at His feet as dead”.

Raising His faithful disciple with His right hand, the Lord Jesus addresses him as follows,

“Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, amen; and have the keys of hell (hades) and death” (Rev 1:17-18).

John is now told by the Lord to write the following:

1. The things that are. These are the non-revelatory events which unfold and which he is party to, all of which precede the breaking of the seventh seal. Nothing transpiring before the breaking of the seventh seal needs any special revelation.

2. The things which shall be hereafter. These are those events which are recorded in Chapter 8:2 onwards. They are unfolded by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Thus, what is recorded on the seven-sealed scroll, is that which is written in the book of The Revelation from Chapter 8:2 onwards. The Lord now explains to John the two things in this first Chapter, which we would not know, apart from His explanation of what the symbols stand for:
 1. The seven stars. The seven stars are the seven angels, or messengers, of the seven churches. The original meaning of the Greek word, “angelos”, was simply “a messenger”, and these seven angels are not supernatural beings, but earthly emissaries from the seven churches, who had come to see the apostle, John, on the isle of Patmos, and would be responsible for conveying that which is recorded on the scroll back to the seven churches which they represented.
 2. The seven lampstands. The seven lampstands represent the seven churches who had sent their messengers to Patmos. The lampstands were not connected to each other, but were each connected to the Lord, who moved in the midst of them. The churches differ from Israel, which is represented by the seven branched minora, or lampstand. The lampstand representing Israel is a single lampstand with seven branches, as opposed to the seven individual lampstands of the seven Asian churches.

The question arises as to whether John was transported bodily to Heaven or otherwise. We are reminded of the apostle, Paul, who, in 2 Cor 12:3, records his experience of being caught up to the third heaven

“whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth.”

It does not matter whether John was literally transported to Heaven or otherwise. The important thing is the commission he received to make known all that he had heard and seen.

Chapters 2 and 3

The seven-fold Church on earth – the Body of Christ

The Seven Churches

It is generally contended that the seven churches portray the history of the Church throughout the ages. Ephesus represents the apostolic church of the first century, Smyrna the persecuted and suffering church of the second and third centuries, experiencing the savage onslaught of the Roman civil power. Christianity was deemed to be a “Religio illicita”, a proscribed religion, once the Roman authorities recognised its separation from Judaism. Thus, through the ages, each one of the seven churches represents different stages of church history until we come to Laodicea, which is representative of the Church

in the 20th century. This explanation is artificial and unsatisfactory as, in every age, churches similar to each one of these seven churches have existed. Every church, recognised by the Lord Jesus Christ as one of His, will fit into one of these seven types of churches. However, should a church wander so far from the truth that it is rejected of the Lord, He will remove its lampstand (Rev 2:5). It may continue to exist physically, but is no longer acknowledged by the Lord as being His. It is proposed to set forth these churches as being:

1. Actual, literal churches which existed in the first century, and the Lord's assessment of them.
2. A particular denomination church may fit largely into one of the seven categories set forth in these seven churches.
3. Any church which has ever existed, and which has not had its lampstand removed, would fit into one of these seven categories.
4. A certain type of church may predominate in a certain age, locality or country.

These seven churches were all very close to one another, and, if one started at Ephesus on the coast of Asia and proceeded in a clockwise direction, one would come to each one of these churches in the order in which they are recorded in The Revelation.

In dealing with these seven churches, the Lord proceeds as follows:

1. He addresses the messenger of the particular church, entrusting him with the message to that church.
2. He then describes Himself in His relationship to that church, quoting from His description as recorded in Rev 1:13-16.
3. He states categorically,

“I know thy works.”

He then commends the church for that which is pleasing in His sight.

4. This is followed by His condemnation of that which displeases Him. He then calls the particular church to repentance. Of all seven churches, it is only Smyrna and Philadelphia, which contain no condemnation, nor any call to repentance. The word, “repentance”, occurs eight times in His address to the five other churches.
5. There is a call to each church to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The refrain

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches”

occurs seven times, once to each church.

6. There are glorious promises made to those who overcome. We are reminded of the only means whereby we may overcome in Rev 12:11, where we read,

“they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

Looking at each of these churches individually, we see:

The church at Ephesus

The apostle Paul called at Ephesus on his journey from Archaia to Antioch, and reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue. But,

“When they desired to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast which cometh in Jerusalem; but I will return again unto you, if God will” (Acts 18:18-23).

Returning to Ephesus on his third missionary journey, he found twelve disciples, who had been baptised by John the Baptist, he rebaptised them, following which they were baptised with the Holy Spirit. For the space of three months, he preached in the synagogue, and we are told

“when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus” (Acts 19:1-9).

Continuing this practice for two years, the Word of God sounded forth and special miracles took place under his ministry. Due to the uproar caused by a silversmith, Demetrius, who inferred disrespect on Paul’s part towards the goddess, Diana (Artemis), Paul departed hurriedly from the city. (Acts 19:23-41).

Ephesus was one of the seven churches which received an epistle from Paul. In his message to this church, the Lord deplores the fact that, in spite of all that He has said to commend them, their love for Him had grown cold. Outwardly, to man’s eye, Ephesus seemed the perfect church, but the Lord, who knoweth the heart, saw the coldness of their love.

Smyrna

This church, which was situated about 40 km east of Ephesus, is commended for its faithfulness. No rebuke passes from the lips of the Lord. The warning which He gives concerns those things which they will be called upon to suffer for His name’s sake. They will be cast into prison, tried and have tribulation ten days. His call to them is not to fear these things which they will suffer for His name’s sake.

Pergamum

There is a Turkish village situated nearby Pergamus called Bergama, a name derived from Pergamus. The city was a great medical centre of the ancient world, and contained the temple of the god of healing, Aesculapius (the Roman Asclepius). In the temple were serpents regarded as sacred to the god, and the sick who lay in the temple and were touched by the serpents as they slithered around, were regarded as enjoying the favour of the god. It is of interest to note that the caduceus with entwined serpents is still the emblem of the medical profession today. It is no wonder that the apostle, John, records Pergamum as the place where Satan's seat is, for the Devil is referred to as "that old serpent" (Rev 12:9). There is much to commend this church, but serious error had already gained a foothold, for there were those who held the doctrine of Balaam,

"who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" (Rev 2:14).

Already we see worship of others besides the Lord being introduced into the Church, for, as fornication speaks of the unlawful affection of a man or woman, so idolatry is the unlawful affection of the individual for anything else other than the living God. There is a call to repent, or else the Lord will come and will fight against them with the sword of His mouth.

Thyatira

Here again, we find the Lord commending much in this church. However, the doctrine of Balaam had become so entrenched that a woman, who called herself a prophetess (symbolically named Jezebel), was teaching and seducing the Lord's servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols. In the Old Testament, it was Jezebel, the daughter of Ithbar, who had so perverted the northern kingdom, and seduced them into the worship of Baal and Astart, that, apart from Elijah, there were only 7 000 who had not bowed their knees to Baal.

In 1 Ki 17:17-40 we find the record of the confrontation between the prophet, Elijah, and 450 prophets of Baal, and 400 prophets of Astart

"which eat at Jezebel's table" (17:19).

This eventuated in the slaying of the 850 prophets by Elijah. In every age, the Devil follows the same procedure. His methods never change. Always he seeks to draw men away from the worship of the living God. The warning of the Lord to Thyatira is that He will kill her children with death, even as Elijah killed the false prophets of Baal and Astart. Referring to the worship of any other than the living God, the Lord Jesus speaks of this false doctrine of idolatry as being "the depths of Satan" (Rev 2:24).

Sardis

This city was the ancient capital of the Lydian empire, and reached the pinnacle of its glory under the reign of Croesus, whose kingdom was brought to an end by the

expanding kingdom of Persia. The riches of Sardis were legendary and it was at Sardis that coins first came into usage. There is no word of commendation as far as Sardis is concerned. The Lord says,

“thou has a name that thou livest, and art dead” (Rev 3:1),

and again,

“I have not found thy works perfect before God” (Rev 3:2).

Here, we find the first warning that the Lord will come as a thief and that they will not know the hour of His coming. However, in spite of the fact that this church was so moribund, there were those in Sardis who had not defiled their God, and of them the Lord said,

“they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy” (Rev 3:4).

Philadelphia

Named after Attalus Philadelphus, this church truly lives up to its name, the church of brotherly love. As with Smyrna, there is no condemnation to this church, but the Lord says,

“I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it” (Rev 3:8).

It is to this church that the first promise of the Lord Jesus Christ concerning the Rapture occurs, for He says,

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation (trial), which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Rev 3:10).

Laodicea

Situated about 20 km from Colossi, this church is mentioned in the Colossian epistle, where the apostle, Paul, instructs that the Colossian epistle should be read at Laodicea, and that they likewise, should read the epistle to Laodicea (Col 4:16). This Laodicean epistle is no longer extant, and thus was obviously not part of the canon. Again we have a church of which there is nothing that can be said to commend it. Being neither cold nor hot, the Lord Jesus says,

“I will spew you out of my mouth.”

In their self confidence, claiming to have “need of nothing”, they are unaware of the fact that they are

“wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev 3:17).

The rebuke of the Lord is always restorative, for He says,

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Rev 3:19).

His position is that of one standing outside the door and knocking. No open door, as with Philadelphia, but a door which the Laodiceans themselves had shut. Christ knocks, saying,

“if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev 3:20).

We see the following concerning these seven churches. Concerning Smyrna and Philadelphia, no condemnation. Concerning Sardis and Laodicea, no commendation. Concerning Ephesus, Pergamum and Thyatira, both commendation and condemnation.

Promise to overcomers in the various churches

To Ephesus – overcomers to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

To Smyrna – overcomers shall not be hurt of the second death.

To Pergamum – instead of eating things sacrificed unto idols, the Lord offers the overcomer to eat of the hidden manna, and to him will be given the white stone, and in this stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it (thus many saints receive new names. Abram became Abraham, Jacob became Israel).

To Thyatira – overcomers, who keep His works to the end (rather than the works of the evil prophetess), will be given authority over the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron and to him will be given the morning star. [Thus the Lord will give Himself to such overcomers, for He says,

“I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star” (Rev 22:16).]

To Sardis – to overcomers, rather than walk in garments which have been defiled, the Lord promises

“the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels” (Rev 3:5).

To Philadelphia – to overcomers, He promises to make them pillars in the temple of His God, writing upon them the name of His God and the name of the city of His God, which is the new Jerusalem

“and I will write upon him my new name” (Rev 3:12).

To Laodicea – to overcomers the Lord will grant such to sit with Him in His throne, even as He overcame, and is seated with the Father on His throne (Rev 3:21).

The Heavenly Scene

Chapter 4 – God’s Rainbow Throne

John is now summoned up on high, where future events are unfolded in order that he might make them known. He sees a throne in Heaven, and, seated on it, sees One, who

“to look upon was like a jasper and sardine stone” (Rev 4:1).

This Personage is none other than God the Father. Seeing Him, Daniel describes Him in his vision as “the Ancient of days” (Dan 7:9), this phrase being descriptive, not of age, but of His eternity. In like manner, Micah, in referring to the Lord Jesus, speaks of Him as the One

“whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Mic 5:2).

The throne of Rev 4 is encircled by a rainbow which has an emerald hue. In Gen, the rainbow was given as a token of God’s covenant with all flesh. This covenant, called the everlasting covenant, which is still in force today, carries God’s promise

“neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth” (Gen 9:11).

The rainbow throne indicates that the door of mercy is not yet shut, but is open so that men may yet

“come boldly unto the throne of grace” that they “may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).

It is of interest at this point to note that the Greek word, “thronos”, translated either “throne” or “seat”, occurs 46 times in The Revelation, and occurring no less than 14 times in this chapter 4, 12 times of the rainbow throne, twice of the thrones (seats) of the 24 elders. Rev 4:4 reveals these 24 elders, clothed in white raiment with crowns of gold upon their heads, seated around the throne. Standing before the throne are also to be seen

“seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” (Rev 4:5),

this latter being descriptive of the Holy Spirit. Before the throne, John sees a sea of glass like unto crystal, later to be occupied by the great multitude, and, still later, mingled with fire and occupied by the martyred saints of the Great Tribulation. Also before the throne, John sees

“four beasts full of eyes before and behind” (Rev 4:6).

The word used for “beast” here, in the Greek, is “zoon”, a different word from that used to describe the Beast of Rev 13, who is none other than the Antichrist, where the word, “therion”, is used, meaning “wild beast”. Thus, rather than refer to these four beings as “beasts”, we shall refer to them as “living creatures”, for they are obviously an angelic order, namely cherubim, who first appear as guardians of the way to the tree of life when our first parents were driven from the garden (Gen 3:24). In Rev, the first living creature is described as having the appearance of a lion, the second of an ox, the third had the face of a man and the fourth was like a flying eagle (Rev 4:7). In Ezek 1, Ezekiel describes these cherubim, where they had each four faces, the face of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle (Ezek 1:20).

It would seem as if Satan belonged to this order of being before his fall, for Ezekiel refers to him as the

“anointed cherub that covereth” (Ezek 28:14).

The cherubim appear to be a very exalted spiritual order of beings associated with the guardianship of the throne of God and of His holiness, for we are told that the six winged living creatures

“rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (Rev 4:8).

This three-fold exclamation, certainly indicative of the tri-unity of the Godhead, as they bless the Lord, the 24 elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne, casting down their crowns before the throne and saying,

“thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev 4:11).

The twenty-four elders of The Revelation

These twenty-four elders, seated before the throne, are heavenly beings who orchestrate and lead the worship of the heavenly host. They do not symbolise the raptured Church, for nowhere in the Scripture are elders set forth as symbolic of the Church. There were elders in Israel long before there were elders in the Church, and rule by elders, both in Israel and the Church, is a system of government ordained of God. Why therefore, not heavenly elders, who have certain responsibilities delegated to them by the Lord, even as He delegates responsibilities to the elders both in Israel and in the Church? In two places we see individual elders addressing John. One address him in Rev 5:5, for we read

“one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not.”

Then again, in Rev 7:13,

“one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?”

Others would have the 24 elders to be the twelve sons of Jacob as head of the twelve tribes of Israel plus the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The twelve apostles will indeed sit on thrones and be associated with the Lord Jesus in the regeneration, for Jesus said to Peter,

“when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, he also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mt 25:31).

This passage, however, has no reference to Heaven but to the millennial reign of Christ.

Chapter 5 – The Lamb and the Seven-Sealed Scroll

The Lion, the Lamb and the Scroll

John now directs our attention to the fact that the One sitting upon the rainbow throne, the Father, is holding a book in His right hand. This book is sealed with seven seals. We shall henceforth refer to this book as a scroll, for the book with which we are familiar today was unknown in the days of the apostle John, only being developed some centuries later. Such a book was called a “codex” as opposed to a “scroll”. The scroll was made either of parchment from the skin of an animal, or was a form of paper made from reeds which grew in Egypt, these latter being called papyrus, from which we get our English word, “paper”. Our English word for “Bible” is derived from the Greek word, “biblion”, a word which occurs 21 times in The Revelation and eight times in Chapter 5. From the KJV it would appear that the scroll has writing on both the inside and the outside, a common practice in that day, in view of the fact that scrolls were very expensive, but, if this scroll had writing on both sides, all its contents would not be hidden, so that it would not be true that no one could look on that which was written, for John states,

“And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon” (Rev 5:3).

Jay Adams, in his “New Testament in Everyday English”, translates Rev 5:1 as follows,

“And I saw in the right hand of the One who sat on the throne a scroll with writing within; and on the outside it was sealed with seven seals.”

Thus, in order to read anything that is written on the scroll, all seven seals must of necessity be broken. In John’s day and age, important documents were sealed with seven seals. Any unauthorised person, breaking such seals, was subject to the death penalty, so rigid was the legal code of the day. Speaking of the fact that none was found worthy to open the seals, John described his reaction by saying,

“I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon” (Rev 5:4).

As has been noted in Chapter 4, one of the 24 elders comforts the apostle with the following words,

“Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof” (Rev 5:5).

John looked and saw One standing before the throne,

“a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth” (Rev 5:6).

We see the following concerning the One who is both Lion and Lamb:

1. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah

Propheying concerning Judah, Jacob said,

“Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be” (Gen 49:9-10).

Not to Jacob’s favourite son, Joseph, but to Judah, was the dominion promised. Thus Jacob prophesies, not according to his own heart’s desire, but as directed by the Lord. The Lion speaks to us of the king of beasts, thus typifying the one to whom the dominion is vouchsafed, and that dominion ultimately belongs to Judah’s great Descendant, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The Root of David

It is the prophet Isaiah, who tells us,

“there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots” (Is 11:1).

How much greater is this branch that grows out of David’s roots that he is called the Root of David? Jesus, addressing the Pharisees, asks them,

“What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, the LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?” (Mt 22:42-45).

The Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, although made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, is greater than all His ancestors.

3. **A Slain Lamb**

Though He is risen, yet, in that glorified body of His, He still bears the marks of the nails in His hands and in His feet. Appearing before His disciples, He said,

“Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have, And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet” (Lu 24:37-40).

Speaking to unbelieving Thomas, Jesus said to him,

“Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless but believing” (Jn 20:27).

The Greek word for “Lamb”, which occurs here, is the diminutive, “arnion”, and it is applied to the Lord Jesus 28 times in The Revelation. Three times in this portion of Scripture, emphasis is laid on the fact of the death of Jesus as the Lamb that was slain (Rev 5:6, 9, 12).

4. According to Rev 5:6, the Lamb has

“seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth”.

a) **The seven horns**

These always speak of power. Thus Daniel’s beast (Dan 7:7), and the Beast of Rev 13:1, have ten horns. In Dan 8, the ram representative of Persia has two horns, and the rough goat representative of Greece has

“a notable horn between his eyes” (Dan 8:5).

These horns represent power given to the Gentile nations during the times of the Gentiles (Lu 21:24). The seven horns of the Lamb speak of His omnipotence.

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Mt 28:18).

b) **The seven eyes**

The seven eyes speak of the omniscience of the Lamb, for

“all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb 4:13).

So likewise, we read in 2 Chr 16:9,

“the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.”

c) The seven Spirits of God

This is a description of the absolute perfection of the Holy Spirit, the most neglected Person of the Godhead. There is a seven-fold description of Him in Is 11:2, where we read, concerning the One who is the Branch, the Lord Jesus,

“the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.”

In His earthly life, all the mighty works of Jesus were accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit. Of John the Baptist, it is written,

“he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb” (Lu 1:15).

Of Jesus, it is said that, at His baptism, John the Baptist

“saw the spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him” (Jn 1:32).

From henceforth, all His mighty works were wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit, for Luke writes that

“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38).

John now saw the Lamb coming and taking the scroll from out of the right hand of the One seated upon the throne, after which the four living creatures and 24 elders fall down before the Lamb, singing a new song, saying,

“Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign upon the earth” (Rev 5:9-10).

Neither the elders nor the living creatures stand in need of redemption, but rather give expression to the fact that Christ has redeemed certain from amongst men to be His peculiar possession. Thus, elsewhere, we find this passage rendered as follows,

“Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priest to our God; and they will reign upon the earth” (Rev 5:9-10 NASB).

With this vast host of angelic beings,

“ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands and thousands” (Rev 5:11),

join with the elders and living creatures singing the following refrain,

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev 5:12).

All creatures in Heaven, and on the earth and beneath the earth may join in saying,

“Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Rev 5:11).

The living creatures echo “Amen”, and the 24 elders fall down and worship Him who lives for ever and ever. (Rev 5:14).

Chapter 6:1-11 – The Lamb breaks the first Five Seals

1. The Four Horsemen

The Lamb commences breaking the seals which prevent the contents of the scroll from being known to anyone till all seven are broken. All that is recorded in the Revelation prior to the breaking of the seventh seal, is not hidden knowledge, it is only that which transpires subsequently to the breaking of the seventh seal which is known only to God until the Lord Jesus reveals it to John. Even the elect angels were unaware of God’s purposes which were expressed on the sealed scroll.

a) The White Horse (Rev 6:2)

One of the four living creatures calls out “Come” as the Lord Jesus Christ breaks the first seal. It is the command to the white horseman to come forth. The rider of the white horse is not Jesus Christ, as many suppose; rather it is the Antichrist, who comes in the guise of Christ. He is a pretender, claiming to be Christ when in actual fact he is Satan’s emissary. Unlike the Lord, who, when He returns, comes riding on a white horse accompanied by the armies of Heaven (Rev 19:14), this rider is unaccompanied. He wears a single crown (Greek *stephanos*) as opposed to the Lord, who comes wearing many crowns (Greek *diadema*). He has a bow in his hand, but no arrows, and he goes forth conquering and to conquer. The Lord Jesus returns with a sharp two edged sword out of His mouth and destroys His enemies instantaneously. It will take some time for the Antichrist to subdue the world, but he will ultimately achieve this, whereas on the Cross the Lord Jesus

“spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Col 2:15).

Concerning His victory, the Lord Jesus said,

“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (Jn 12:31).

Even though the Antichrist seemingly triumphs over the tribulation saints who refuse to receive his mark, yet Scripture records that it is they that

“had gotten the victory over the beast” (Rev 15:2).

b) The Red Horse (Rev 6:4)

Christ opens the second seal and the second living creature calls out “Come”. The red horse with its rider comes forth and, as a result, it is given to him

“to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword” (Rev 6:4).

Since the First World War, there has been constant turmoil and battle upon the earth. Since the end of the Second World War, there has not been a single day of peace upon the earth. From 1945 until the war with Iraq, code named “Desert Storm”, there has been something of the order of 200 conflicts in the world. The sophistication of the weaponry used against Iraq was phenomenal. Missiles struck with pinpoint accuracy. Stealth fighters, constructed from space age materials, flew undetected to their targets. The desire for peace has resulted and a leader who will promise peace to men so that the world might have rest from strife and turmoil. The Antichrist will come with false promises of peace, causing men to

say, “Peace and safety”, but the apostle Paul warns that, when men say this,

“sudden destruction will come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child: and they shall not escape” (1 Th 5:3).

Peace will only come to this sin troubled world with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Prince of Peace (Is 9:6).

c. The Black Horse (Rev 6:5-6)

The Lamb breaks the third seal and the third living creature summons the black horse with its rider with its “Come”. Emerging, the rider is seen to have a pair of balances (scales) in his hand. One of the living creatures cries out,

“a measure of wheat for a penny, three measures of barley for a penny; see thou hurt not the oil and the wine” (Rev 6:6).

This horseman heralds a time of scarcity or famine. Wheat was the food of the more affluent and barley of the poorer people. The coin called “a penny”, or “denarius”, was the daily wage of the working man. It was the wage paid for all those labourers who were hired to work in the vineyard in the parable in Mt 20:1-16. The measure, in Greek “choenix”, was roughly the equivalent of a litre. Thus the daily wage of a working man would be sufficient to buy either a litre of wheat or three litres of barley, indicating scarcity. All three synoptic gospels record the words of Jesus when He prophesied that there would be famine (Mt 24:7; Mk 13:8; Lu 21:11).

d) The Pale Horse (Rev 6:7-8)

Answering the summons to “Come”, the pale horse with its rider, whose name is death, emerges with Hades following with him (Rev 6:7). We are told that

“power was given unto them (death and Hades) over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth” (Rev 6:8).

Isaiah writes concerning Hades,

“Therefore hell (Hebrew Sheol) hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it” (Is 5:14).

2. The Martyrs under the Altar (Rev 6:9-11)

With the Lord breaking the fifth seal, John writes that he

“saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held” (Rev 6:9).

They cried to the Lord to avenge their blood which has been spilled upon the earth. In The Revelation we see two martyr companies, a) the martyrs under the altar and b) the martyrs who stand on the glassy sea mingled with fire (Rev 15:2).

a) The Martyrs under the Altar

There cannot be two companies of tribulation martyrs. This company, therefore, is made up of those martyrs from Abel right down to the time of the Rapture. Over the centuries, vast numbers of God’s choicest saints have chosen to die rather than deny their Lord. 2 000 years ago the Lord, speaking to the religious leaders of His generation said,

“I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zecharias the son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar” (Mt 23:34-35).

Add to these all those who have been martyred by rulers and religious leaders who knew not the Lord over the last 2 000 years and recognise them under the altar in Heaven. John tells us that they are given white robes and told to wait a little while that the remainder of the martyrs of this age may be joined to them.

b) The Martyrs on the glassy Sea mingled with Fire

We will look at these in greater detail later. Sufficient to note here that these are the martyrs who will be slain by the Antichrist and his followers.

The events which take place with the breaking of the five seals correspond to what the Scripture calls “the beginnings of sorrows” (Mk 13:8). The Greek word translated “sorrows” is the word for “birth pangs” or “travail”, as in 1 Cor 5:3. In other words, they are not referring to the Great Tribulation, but are the birth pangs of the wrath of God which is to come upon the earth, which is only recognised as commencing by the world’s inhabitants with the breaking of the sixth seal. It is well at this point to compare these birth pangs, as revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ in the three synoptic Gospels, with the seals of The Revelation.

THE LAMB BREAKS THE SEVEN SEALS ON THE SCROLL (Rev 6:1-	MATTHEW, MARK AND LUKE All these are the beginning of sorrows.
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<p>8:1)</p> <p><u>THE FIRST SEAL (Rev 6:1-2)</u> A WHITE HORSE ... he that sat on him went forth CONQUERING and to CONQUER ... THE ANTICHRIST</p> <p><u>THE SECOND SEAL (Rev 6:3-4)</u> A RED HORSE ... it was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, that they should KILL one another: and there was given to him a GREAT SWORD.</p> <p><u>THE THIRD SEAL (Rev 6:5-6)</u> A BLACK HORSE ... a PAIR OF BALANCES in his hand ... a MEASURE of WHEAT for a DAY'S WAGE ... famine.</p> <p><u>THE FOURTH SEAL (Rev 6:7-8)</u> A PALE HORSE ... His NAME that sat on him was DEATH and HADES followed ... AUTHORITY was given them over the FOURTH PART of the EARTH to KILL with SWORD, and with HUNGER, and with DEATH, and with the BEASTS of the FIELD.</p> <p><u>THE FIFTH SEAL (Rev 6:9-11)</u> I saw UNDER THE ALTAR the SOULS of them that were SLAIN for the WORD of GOD, and for the TESTIMONY which they held 111 MARTYRS. TWO COMPANIES OF MARTYRS ARE SEEN IN THE REVELATION: 1. MARTYRS up to the RAPTURE (Rev 6:9-11).</p>	<p>“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not” (Mt 24:23-26).</p> <p>“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For NATION shall rise against NATION, and KINGDOM against KINGDOM” (Mt 24:6-7).</p> <p>“And there shall be FAMINES and troubles” (Mk 13:8).</p> <p>It is only in the 1980's of this present twentieth century that we have seen the advent of a scourge called Aids, a pestilence indeed, which has the potential for wiping out humanity. The spread of this disease is escalating alarmingly with millions who have already died of it. “And famines, and PESTILENCES; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven” (Lu 21:11).</p> <p>“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall KILL you: and ye shall be hated of all NATIONS for MY NAME'S SAKE. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another” (Mt 24:9-10).</p>
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<p>2. MARTYRS after the RAPTURE or TRIBULATION MARTYRS (REV 15:1-4).</p> <p><u>THE SIXTH SEAL (Rev 6:12-7:17)</u> <u>FOUR MAJOR EVENTS TAKE PLACE</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. GREAT SIGNS on EARTH and in the HEAVENS. The SUN becomes BLACK and the FULL MOON becomes BLOOD RED. According to Joel 2:28-32 and Acts 2:14-21, these SIGNS signify the END of the CHURCH AGE (Rev 6:12-14). 2. The INHABITANTS of the EARTH realise that the GREAT DAY OF GOD'S WRATH has begun (Rev 6:15-17). 3. 144 000 JEWS from all the tribes except DAN are SEALED to SERVE GOD in the TRIBULATION (Rev 7:1-8). 4. The RESURRECTED and RAPTURED SAINTS appear before the THRONE, in HEAVEN (Rev 7:9-17). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. See Luke 21:11, 25-28 for these GREAT SIGNS in the SOLAR SYSTEM. Men's hearts will FAIL them for FEAR as they take place. 4. Those on EARTH accounted WORTHY, ESCAPE the IMMINENT or IMPENDING EVENTS of the GREAT TRIBULATION (Lu 21:34-36).
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Chapter 6:12 - 7:17 – The Lamb breaks the Sixth Seal

John describes four major events which take place with the breaking of the sixth seal. Tabulating them here as follows and then dealing with them one by one, we see:

1. Great signs and wonders
2. Advent of the Day of Wrath
3. The sealing of the 144 000
4. The great multitude before the Throne

1. Great signs and wonders

With the opening of the sixth seal by the Lord, we see a number of signs and wonders taking place:

- a) Lo, there was a great earthquake (Rev 6:12)
There has been a significant increase in earthquakes in the twentieth century. In the regions of Armenia, Turkey and Iran, they have occurred

with increasing frequency. The great earthquake here heralds a series of earthquakes which will occur in this time. The next one is recorded in Rev 8:5, prior to the sounding of the seven trumpets. The next is in Rev 11:13 when the two witnesses are resurrected and caught up to Heaven. Another is recorded in Rev 11:19, together with great hail. The last, in Rev 16:18, where the Scripture says

“there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.”

- b) The Sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood
Many events recording a darkened sun, moon and stars are to be found in Scripture. We are told by the Lord Himself that

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light” (Mt 24:29).

There are, however, only three Scriptures where we are told of the moon turning to blood when the sun is darkened. The first Scripture is Joel 2:31, which is quoted by the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost and is recorded in Acts 2:20. The last is this one in Rev 6:12. On the day of Pentecost Peter quotes from Joel,

“The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great notable day of the Lord come” (Acts 2:20).

Then this one in The Revelation where we read that the moon became as blood. Peter and Joel indicate that this event will come just before the Day of the Lord. This day follows after this present age and endures until the end of the Millennium. It is evident that the Day commences with the manifestation of God’s wrath upon the wicked. Zephaniah, describing the Day of the Lord, says,

“That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Zeph 1:16).

It is no wonder that earth’s inhabitants recognise these signs as the commencement of the wrath of God.

- c) The stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree cast her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together.

The stars which fall indicate meteorites raining down upon the earth, and, in the Old Testament, the hail that fell in Egypt as well as the hail stones which fell on the Amorite kings of Canaan when they contended with

Joshua, were not watery hail, but consisted of showers of meteorites. Parts of the desert of Arabia contain vast areas where such meteorites are to be found. Isaiah, speaking of this day, says,

“all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling from the fig tree” (Is 34:4).

There is only one way in which the heavens could appear to depart as a scroll, and that would be for the reversal of earth’s two hemispheres. If some heavenly event were to cause the earth to become unstable, and the two hemispheres were to reverse positions, the heavens would appear to be departing like a scroll or be rolled together to any observer on the earth. Is there some indication that such an event could possibly take place? Isaiah, writing of the Day of the Lord, says,

“Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts and in the day of his fierce anger” (Is 13:13).

In Is 24:1, we read,

“Behold, the LORD, maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down.”

Why should this turning upside down of the earth be non literal, in view of the fact that later in the same chapter we read,

“the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth be shaken. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall remove like a cottage” (Is 24:18-20).

Were the earth to be turned upside down, it would truly be “moved exceedingly”, but with God all things are possible. Luke records the Lord as saying,

“and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; and the sea and the waves roaring; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken” (Lu 21:11; 25:6).

Were a reversal of the two hemispheres to take place, the sea and the waves would most certainly roar as the earth tumbled in space, and undoubtedly men's hearts would fail them for fear when they beheld such events. The powers of heaven referred to by Luke are the planets of our solar system which were worshipped by the heathen. The following is culled from a newspaper:

- d) Every mountain and island will move out of their places
We read later in Rev 16:20, with the last great earthquake that shakes the earth that

“every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.”

Such events must not be dismissed as being impossible and belonging to the realms of fancy. It is true that men today are willingly ignorant concerning the fact that there was a universal flood in the days of Noah which covered every high mountain (2 Pet 3:5). It needs to be recognised that what God says, He will bring to pass. In a cataclysm, involving the earth being moved exceedingly, the disappearance of islands and mountains is not unexpected.

2. Advent of the Day of Wrath – Rev 6:15-17

The signs which have just been described bring a reaction amongst the inhabitants of the earth. We have recorded seven classes of society ranging from kings to slaves, who recognise that what they have witnessed and experienced heralds the commencement of God's wrath, and they cry out to the mountains and rocks to fall on them and to hide them from the face of the One who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb as they declare

“the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?” (Rev 6:17 NASB).

Isaiah the prophet saw this very day, for he wrote of men that

“they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth” (Is 2:19).

This portion is the first place where God's wrath is mentioned in The Revelation, a sure indication that the Rapture has taken place, for the apostle Paul tells us

"God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Th 5:9).

Two Greek words for "wrath" are used in The Revelation and they occur sixteen times altogether, being used only once of the wrath of the Devil (Rev 12:12).

3. The Sealing of the 144 000 – Rev 7:1-8

John now sees four angels restraining the four winds of the earth, with another angel descending from the east having the seal of the living God. This latter angel cries out to the four angels, saying,

"Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their forehead" (Rev 7:3).

The purpose of the wrath of God in the pouring out of His anger on mankind is to hurt the earth and, when the sounding of the trumpets commence, we see that the green grass, trees and sea hurt as a result of the outpouring of God's fierce anger. The 144 000 are sealed as servants of God and, according to Rev 14:4, they are

"the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."

Thus they will be the first to believe after the Rapture. That the Rapture takes place at this juncture is evident in that the Church, His servants in this present age, have been caught up to meet Christ in the air. Many false theories are advanced concerning the 144 000. Some contend that this is a symbolic number representative of the redeemed of all the ages. It is asserted that they cannot be Jews, who no longer know to which tribe they belong. This constitutes no problem as far as God is concerned, for He knows to which tribe every Jew belongs, and is able to correctly instruct the angel, who will make no mistake in marking 12 000 from each tribe. It is evident that we too bear the seal of God, for the apostle Paul warns us not to grieve

"the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30).

So, likewise, the destroying angel is commanded in Ezek 9:6,

"Slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon who is the mark".

Of the tribes of Israel the tribe of Dan is omitted in the sealing, one tribe, that of Joseph, having become two tribes. The angel seals 12 000 each out of Judah,

Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin, making 144 000 in all. That the twelve tribes become thirteen is evidence of the rebellious nature of Israel. Thirteen is the number of sin and rebellion in Scripture. We read,

“Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled” (Gen 13:4).

Many reasons are advanced for the omission of the tribe of Dan. Some contend it was their idolatry. However, all the tribes were idolatrous. Others suggest it is because the Antichrist will come from the tribe of Dan, a suggestion which is sheer guesswork. We are not told why they are omitted, and guessing serves no useful purpose. The tribe of Dan will, however, survive the Great Tribulation, and in Ez 48:1 they are the first tribe to receive their allotted portion in the division of the land.

4. The Great Multitude before the Throne – Rev 7:9-17

This is the last of the four scenes revealed to John when the sixth seal is broken. Though this is described last, we see the great multitude already in Heaven and standing before the throne of God. Undoubtedly all these things happen simultaneously with the breaking of the seal. However, a sequence needs to be adopted in describing all that takes place at that time. This great host

“which no man could number” (Rev 7:9)

are clothed with white robes and have palms in their hands and they cry with a loud voice,

“Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (Rev 7:10).

The angels, elders and living creatures fall down in adoration before the living God, echoing their “Amen” to these redeemed of mankind who describe their salvation to the wonderful working of God and the Lamb. They cry out

“Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever” (Rev 7:12).

One of the heavenly elders then addresses John, asking him,

“What (who) are these that are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?” (Rev 7:13)

Expressing personal ignorance, John replies to the elder,

“Sir, thou knowest” (Rev 7:14).

To this the elder replies,

“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 7:14).

Most students of The Revelation consider this multitude to represent the saints who will be converted during the Great Tribulation. This however is not so, for we see the tribulation saints described in Rev 13 where we are told that the Antichrist will

“make war with the saints” and “overcome them” (Rev 13:7).

These tribulation saints will face two options – to resist actively, which will result in martyrdom, or, alternatively, to resist passively, which will result in enslavement. This is clearly set forth in Rev 13:10, where we read,

“If any one is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if any kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed.”

Thus, concerning those who are killed by the Antichrist and his followers, it is said that they have been

“beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 20:4)

Those who are enslaved and survive the Great Tribulation will naturally enter into the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus in physical bodies.

The great multitude who stand before the throne clothed in white robes are the dead in Christ who rise incorruptible in glorified bodies at the time of the Rapture together with the glorified believers who are alive at His coming (1 Th 4:17). The writer to Hebrews says

“unto them that look for him shall he appear to them the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb 9:28).

The Greek word translated in Rev 7:14, “out of”, is the word “ek”, and W.E. Vine has this to say concerning it, in his Expository Dictionary Vol 3 page 149,

“The preposition EK (or EX), which frequently signifies ‘out of’ or ‘from the midst of’ has a variety of meanings, among which is ‘from’ as virtually equal to APO, which is ‘away from’.”

So then this great multitude comes away from the Great Tribulation by being removed at the Rapture at the same time as the sealing of the 144 000 and the

recognition of the commencement of the Wrath of God by the inhabitants of the earth when they see the great signs and fearful sights recorded in Rev 6. The elder tells John concerning this great multitude that:

- a) They are before the throne of God, that is, they stand in His presence.
- b) They serve Him night and day in His temple. What form that service will take we are yet to see.
- c) He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. Finally we shall come to that place where God purposed us to be originally for ever in His presence.
- d) They shall hunger no more neither shall they thirst any more. No wonder the apostle Paul wrote,

“I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Ro 8:18).

The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters. The Lamb will shepherd us in that day. He who is the great Shepherd of the sheep will be with us, the sheep of His pasture throughout the ages.

- e) He shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. We read in The Revelation 21:4,

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

Chapter 8:1 – The Seventh Seal

Silence in Heaven

With the breaking of this seal, the contents of the scroll will begin to be unfolded by the Lord to His servant John. Thus, what follows in The Revelation is that which could not be known by observation, but required an unfolding by the Lamb and only by Him. That God purposed wrath upon those who would not believe the Gospel but “had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Th 2:12) is constantly repeated in both the Old as well as the New Testaments. But never before had God spelled out in such detail what form that “wrath” would take until the contents of the scroll were made known to John.

That God delights in mercy rather than in wrath is true and it is only very slowly that He manifests His anger when sinners have allowed the Cup of Wrath to overflow. Isaiah refers to wrath as God's strange work in Is 28:21,

“For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.”

That which follows the breaking of the seventh seal is so awful in its fulfillment that there is silence in Heaven for half an hour as all who now are to be found there wait with bated breath for that which is to follow. It is indeed the wrath of God and the Lamb, as recognised by the earth-dwellers in Rev 6:16-17, which is about to burst forth in the earth.

B. Revelatory Portion of the Revelation (Rev 8:2 - 22:21)

That which only the Lamb could look upon is now revealed, step by step, to the apostle John. The period of the Wrath of God which is poured out without measure is now described. We need to remember that wrath is indiscriminate, whereas judgment is measured, and is according to works (Rev 20:13). The duration of this wrath is seven years (of 360 days each), and it is divided into two equal periods of 1 260 days each.

The major difference between the two periods is that the first half is dominated by the two witnesses of Rev 11 and wrath is still mingled with hope, while the second half is dominated by the Antichrist who will have killed the two witnesses, and the fierceness of God's wrath is poured out.

The first half of the Day of Wrath (Rev 8:2 - 11:14)

1. Celestial Visitations (Rev 8:2-12)

John sees seven angels who are responsible for sounding the trumpets which herald the waves of wrath which are going to affect the earth and all who dwell on it during the following seven year period. Another angel (an eighth), standing at the altar with a censer, is given much incense to offer with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar before the throne of God. We need to note some very important things mentioned here:

- i. There is a heavenly altar made of gold (Rev 8:3)
- ii. There is an ark of His testament (Rev 11:19)
- iii. There is a heavenly temple (Rev 14:15)

Thus we see that, when God told Moses to make a tabernacle in the wilderness, and told him to

“make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount”
(Heb 8:5),

it was patterned after the heavenly temple which we see in The Revelation.

We are also to take note of the importance of the “prayers of all saints” in the heavens. Never let us think that our prayers are of little significance in the sight of God. The smoke from the censer, together with the prayers of the saints, ascend before the throne of God, surely as a sweet smelling savour before the Almighty.

The eighth angel now takes fire from off the altar and fills the censer with it, and the fire is cast down upon the earth. The sound of voices and thunderings, together with lightnings and an earthquake, signal the commencement of the outpouring of the Wrath of God upon the earth, as the angels prepare to sound their trumpets.

- a) The First Trumpet – Hail and Fire (Rev 8:7)
The first angel sounds his trumpet and we are told that

“there followed hail and fire mingled with blood”

which are cast upon the earth,

“and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.”

It is a pity that there are so many who will not admit that this is a literal description of events that lie in the future. If we are to allow explanations which are not literal, we do injustice to the record of the Old Testament.

Concerning the seventh plague which occurred in Egypt when Moses sought the release of the Jewish slaves, we read that the LORD said to Moses,

“Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field ... and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt” (Ex 9:22-23).

Remember that Moses and Elijah, the two witnesses of Rev 11, are on the earth when this event occurs.

The fire which is mingled with the hail is indicative of the fact that we are not dealing with hail which consists of frozen water, but rather with burning meteorites raining down from the heavens in vast numbers upon the earth. It requires fiery hail to burn one third of the trees and all the green grass. As the hail in Pharaoh's Egypt

“smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field”
(Ex 3:25),

so this hail, falling from interstellar space, will utterly destroy all grass and one third of the trees on earth. Those cosmic signs, which are described in Rev 6:12-14, are but the beginning of seven years of pounding the earth with all manner of missiles from the outer reaches of space.

Much the same type of wrath fell on the Canaanites (Amorites) who fought against Joshua, for we read in Jo 10:11,

“And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were going down to Bethhoron, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.”

The psalmist makes it much clearer when he describes the wrath of God, saying,

“From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds.
Hailstones and coals of fire. The LORD also thundered in the heavens, And the Most High uttered His voice, Hailstones and coals of fire” (Ps 18:12-13 NASB).

b) The Second Trumpet – Great Mountain burning with Fire (Rev 8:8-9)

When the second angel trumpets, a further devastating piece of debris from space pounds the planet. John writes,

“a great burning mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.”

The meteorites, which showered the earth in Rev 6:13 and Rev 8:7, are now followed by something which is far bigger. So large is this meteor that, on entering the atmosphere of the earth and igniting due to friction, it appears like a great burning mountain. An article appeared in “The Natal

Mercury” on the 13th June 1990 entitled “Mountain-sized space boulders threat to Earth”. The writer of the article says

“In March 1989 an asteroid bigger than an aircraft carrier and travelling at 74 000 kph crossed the Earth’s orbit just six hours after the planet passed the same point in space.”

In an article in the “Daily News” the following appeared,

“If an asteroid 12 km in diameter (there are hundreds of them out there) were to strike the Earth at high speed, our atmosphere would do very little to slow down such a large body. Most of its mass would vapourise almost instantaneously on impact and the energy released, equivalent to some ten trillion tons of TNT, would produce a crater some 150 km in diameter.”

How fortunate then that the great mountain burning with fire of Rev 8:8 lands in the sea where the damage will not be as severe. No wonder Jesus speaks of the

“sea and waves roaring” (Lu 21:25).

Even so, vast numbers of the denizens of the deep will perish and one third of the ships in the seas will be destroyed.

- c) The Third Trumpet – Great Star from Heaven (Rev 8:10-11)
When the third angel sounds his trumpet we are told

“there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.”

There is a continuation of the bombardment of the earth from space. The heavenly body which now falls on the earth disintegrates and the fine dust and particles fall into the vital drinking water on which mankind relies. While it is possible to go for a considerable time without food, water is vital for the continuation of life. Man cannot go without water for more than a few days without dying and yet here, the very waters on which he relies, become poisonous from the residue of this disintegrating visitor from space.

Is the material radioactive? Or is it just that some element in the makeup of this meteor or asteroid is a deadly poison? The word, “Wormwood” translates the Greek word, “Apsinthos”, (English - Absinth). Absinth is derived from a bitter plant and it is poisonous. Infused in small quantities

in wine, it is the basis of the alcoholic drink bearing that name. There are many desert places in the world where water is poisoned by the dissolved salts it contains. It was at Mara that Moses was commanded to cast a certain tree into the bitter waters in order to make the water drinkable (Ex 15:25).

We must be careful not to spiritualise these Scriptures, always following the golden rule of interpretation, namely, “If the grammatical sense makes common sense then seek no other meaning.”

d) The Fourth Trumpet – Third Part of Sun, Moon and Stars Darkened (Rev 8:12)

With the sounding of the fourth trumpet, we are informed by the apostle John that

“the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for the third part of it, and the night likewise.”

The cosmic disturbances still continue, and now the heavenly bodies are affected so that there is total darkness for eight out of the twenty-four hours of the day.

We ask again whether this could be literal darkness or spiritual darkness, and the answer comes back loud and clear. It is the same sort of occurrence as that which happened in the land of Egypt. The ninth plague brought such conditions to pass in Egypt at the time of the Exodus. We read in Ex 10:21,

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt.”

In fulfillment of the word of God, we are told that there was

“thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings” (Ex 10:22-23).

With the conclusion of this manifestation of the Wrath of God, we are told that an angel flies through the heavens saying with a loud voice,

“Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound!” (Rev 8:13).

It has been through cosmic disturbances that the Wrath of God has been manifested so far with the trumpeting of the first four angels. In that which transpires with the sounding of the next two trumpets, God allows sentient beings to bring home to sinful man the consequences of refusing to avail himself of the means God has provided for his restoration to a right relationship with Him.

2. Intraterrestrial Visitations (Rev 9:1-21)

Chapter nine of The Revelation contains details of the two woes which bring to an end the descriptions of the tribulations which constitute the first 1 260 days of the Wrath of God. We will deal with these woes consecutively beginning with:

- a) The FIRST WOE – The Fifth Trumpet – the Abyss Opened (Rev 9:1-12)
When the fifth angel trumpets, John sees a star fall from Heaven to the earth. This star is an angel, and he is given the

“Key of the bottomless pit” (Rev 9:1).

It is necessary to establish the exact meaning of the bottomless pit, for many who believe that The Revelation is not literal, suggest the most diverse interpretations. From being regarded as the desert of Arabia to the factories manufacturing the weapons of the end-time, the interpretations are legion. It is the Bible alone which defines the meaning of the word which is translated “bottomless pit”. We have here the Greek word, “Abusson”, which is best transliterated into the English word “Abyss”. The word “Abussos” is to be found in nine places in the New Testament. Examining these places, we see the following:

- i. The demons in Legion (there are many, for 2 000 pigs rushed headlong to their destruction in the sea) plead with the Lord Jesus not to send them into the Abyss, which is translated “Deep” in Lu 8:31. This would suggest that demons had been sent there previously and that it was not a popular destination with them.
- ii. We are told in the next Scripture in Ro 10:7,

“Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ from the dead)”.

Here it is apparent that Jesus Christ went into the Abyss when He died.

- iii. The word is found seven times in The Revelation and in each case it is rendered “bottomless pit”. In the Greek text, we see that there

is a shaft going down into this place and that it is sealed so that none can return from it without God's permission. (See Rev 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3).

From our knowledge that Jesus went there when He died, an examination of other Scriptures will help us to identify the Abyss or Bottomless Pit:

i We read in Mt 12:40 that the Son of Man would be three days and three nights IN THE HEART OF THE EARTH. Thus the Abyss is in the heart (or centre) of the earth.

ii David prophesied about the Lord saying,

“thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (hades)” (Acts 2:27).

This is a quotation from Ps 16:10, where the word “Sheol” is used for the place of the departed dead. Thus we know that the Abyss contains “Sheol” or “Hades”, the place of the departed dead.

iii. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, says of the Lord that

“he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth”

before he ascended on high (Eph 4:9).

iv. He told the dying malefactor who asked the Lord to remember him when He came into His kingdom,

“Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Lu 23:43).

(We see from Lu 16:19-31 that Hades was divided by a “great gulf fixed” into two compartments, namely, Abraham's bosom or paradise, and a place of torment.)

Summing up, then, the Abyss is in the lower parts of the earth, or the heart of the earth. In it was Hades, which was divided into paradise and a place of torment. The Abyss, we see from Rev 9:1-12 also, is the abode of terrible beings, and was a place feared by those demons who were still not confined there. Because of the fiery nature of the earth's interior, when the angel opens the shaft of the Abyss, smoke arises out of the pit (or shaft), and the result is

that the sun and the air are darkened by reason of the smoke. From out of this smoke, there come forth locusts upon the earth, possessing the stings of scorpions. They are commanded not to destroy any vegetation, but rather that they should torment all who dwell on earth who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They do not kill men, but, for five months, they torment them with their stings, which are located in their tails. So terrible will these days be, that we are told that

“in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them” (Rev 9:6).

What manner of creatures these are, we can by no means ascertain, beyond the fact that they are demonic in nature, for they proceed from the very place that the demons in Legion begged to be spared. We are told that they have a king over them who is the angel of the Abyss, and his name is Apollyon, or Abaddon, both names meaning “Destroyer” (Rev 9:11).

Of real locusts we read,

“The locusts have no king” (Prov 30:27).

The description of these creatures beggars description, for we certainly know of no creatures like these. However, to deny that such creatures are real, is to profess more knowledge than we possess. There can be no doubt that they are thinking creatures who can discriminate between those who have the seal of God in their foreheads and those who do not.

Returning to the angel of the Abyss, it is clear from his name that this fearsome being is of such a character that it was necessary for God to confine him in the Abyss. One can imagine his rage when he emerges from the place of confinement with the demon horde he leads. It is no wonder that men desire death rather than face the woe that is the result of this trumpet sounding.

Verse twelve informs us that this woe is past and there are yet two more to come.

b) The SECOND WOE – The Sixth Trumpet – One-third of Men Killed (Rev 9:13-21)

When the sixth angel sounds his trumpet, a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God calls on the angel to

“Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates” (Rev 9:14).

This part of the world has always been the centre of rebellion against God throughout the ages. It was here that Nimrod first raised men in opposition to the Lord. It is from Babylon that every evil that has assailed us since the flood has proceeded. There is no reason to doubt that these angels are literally confined there by the decree of God, and that they are waiting to be set free to accomplish the work of destruction which they are so fitted to lead. God does not confine the wicked angels without good cause. These angels have a specific purpose, and that is to lead a supernatural army against men with the purpose of destroying one-third of mankind.

They are prepared for a specific time in the history of man, and will not be set free to accomplish their mission until that time is at hand. The army mentioned here is not a human army, and the battle is not between the nations of the world. The number, two hundred million, is vast, and is often associated with Armageddon. However, no human army has angels as its commanders, certainly no evil angels lead such armies. As the locusts come forth out of the Abyss, so it is also likely that this vast host of supernatural beings will also be allowed to come forth from the same place, i.e. the Abyss.

The description again is such that one cannot imagine such creatures existing. Reading about the cherubim and seraphim and what their appearance is like, fills the reader with astonishment. Let us not think that, because they are so unfamiliar, they are not real, for indeed they are, as men will soon perceive. Their mission is stated in verse eighteen, where we read,

“By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone (sulphur), which issued out of their mouth.”

The extent of this manifestation of wrath is hard to imagine. With one out of every three inhabitants of the earth perishing as the result of the destruction wreaked by this host, the stench of death will fill the earth. If there are four-and-a-half thousand million people on earth at this time, then one-and-a-half thousand million will die. There will not be time nor opportunity to rid the earth of the dead, either by burial or cremation. The wonder of all this is that those who survive this terrible time will not repent of any of their evil. Having chosen to walk in rebellion, they will harden their hearts and continue in their rejection of the mercy of God.

Chapter 10:1-11 – The Little Scroll – Wrath to Continue

With the ending of the second woe (or sixth trumpet), the apostle John completes describing those disasters which will befall mankind during the first three-and-a-half years of the seven year period of wrath. They have caused such destruction to the earth, and such unmitigated woe to men, that one might think that there can be no more wrath due to the sinners of the earth. Not so.

John sees a

“mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire” (Rev 10:1).

This angel has a little open book in his hand. Placing his right foot upon the seas and his left foot on the earth, he cries out, and his voice is like that of a roaring lion.

“When he had cried, seven thunders uttered” (Rev 10:3).

John is about to write down in The Revelation what the seven thunders uttered, but he is told to

“Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not” (Rev 10:4).

There are many who have attempted to explain the meaning of the seven thunders. How any one could ever know their meaning, these expositors neglect to tell their students and readers. As Daniel was told to

“shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end” (Dan 12:4),

so John hears a voice from Heaven telling him to seal the things uttered by the seven thunders. Thus, alone out of all the book of The Revelation, which is not a sealed book, these thunders will only be known when the time for their fulfillment is at hand and not before. It is therefore futile to speculate as to their meaning. God has decided that it is better for us not to know what they mean; let us be content with His ruling.

The little book (or scroll) is the Greek word “Biblaridion”, and it is only found in this chapter of the Bible (four times). The little book is the remainder of the Wrath of God which has not yet been fulfilled, but must still come to pass before the return of the Lord Jesus to establish His kingdom here on earth. This is borne out by the fact that the angel swears by the Creator of all that exists, visible and invisible, that there is going to be no longer any delay, but that

“in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets” (Rev 10:7).

John again hears a voice from Heaven commanding him to

“Go and take the little book which is open in the hands of the angel” (Rev 10:8),

a command which John obeys, whereupon the angel tells him,

“Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth as sweet as honey” (Rev 10:9).

As John obeys the angel, he finds that his words are indeed true. As he eats the book, he finds it to taste like honey in his mouth, but it made his belly bitter. It is evident that this is symbolic, and not to be taken literally, so, in order to understand its significance, we have to turn to other parts of the Scripture to understand its meaning.

Turning to the prophet Ezekiel, we find that he is commissioned to be the bearer of the news of the total destruction of Jerusalem, and the scattering of the children of Israel amongst the nations. The context of the passage deals with the rebelliousness of the children of Israel, just as the book of The Revelation deals with the final rebellion of mankind against God in that they choose to follow the Antichrist rather than to obey the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Lord GOD commands the prophet,

“And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that which I give thee. And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein (a scroll); And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe” (Ezek 2:7-10).

Similarly, the little scroll, which is given to John to eat, contains lamentations and mourning and woe, which is yet to come upon mankind as a result of those things which will come to pass with the sounding of the trumpet of the seventh angel. That the scroll tastes sweet as honey in the mouth of the apostle is indicative of the fact that, to the believer, all that God decrees, whether good or bad, is recognised as just and true. The bitterness in the stomach of John is indicative of the fact that the message he has to proclaim is not good but bad news; he is the harbinger of evil tidings to rebellious mankind.

The Christian, likewise, cannot but agree that all the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous. He has borne with the wickedness of man with much longsuffering. We see the longsuffering of God in that He told Abram that his descendants could not inherit the land of Canaan for four hundred years because

“the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full” (Gen 15:16).

The final command to John from the mighty angel indicates that God is not yet finished with His dealings with man, but that there is yet more wrath coming upon them,

“Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings” (Rev 10:11).