

# Revelation

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- SEAL 5 - souls in heaven wanting revenge
- SEAL 6 - earthquake, black sun, red moon, stars fall, sky recedes, no wind, 144,000 sealed, Tribulation martyrs in heaven
- SEAL 7 - half hour silence in heaven, 7 trumpets, gold censer, lightening and earthquake
  
- TRUMPET 1 - hail, fire, blood, 1/3 of earth and trees burned, all grass burned
- TRUMPET 2 - fire mountain to sea, 1/3 of sea life killed, 1/3 of ships destroyed
- TRUMPET 3 - blazing star (Wormwood) poisons 1/3 of rivers and springs

- TRUMPET 4 - 1/3 of sun/moon/stars dark, 1/3 of day/night without light, flying eagle says Woe, woe, woe
  - TRUMPET 5 - Abyss opened, with smoke, locusts whose king is Abaddon, death eludes people, harm to sealed 144,000 forbidden
  - TRUMPET 6 - four angels at Euphrates released to kill 1/3 of people, mighty angel & little scroll, measure city, two witnesses prophecy for 1260 days (3.5 years), then die/live, then earthquake destroys tenth of city and 7000 people
  - TRUMPET 7 - sign in heaven of women giving birth, red dragon thwarted and thrown to earth, beast out of sea with "fatal" wound rules world, beast out of earth (false prophet?) requires mark, angel reaps earth, blood flows as high as horse's bridle for 180 miles, 7 bowls ready
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- BOWL 1 - poured on land, sores on people with beast's mark
  - BOWL 2 - poured on sea, sea became blood, all sea life dies
  - BOWL 3 - poured on rivers & springs, which became blood
  - BOWL 4 - poured on sun, scorches people
  - BOWL 5 - poured on throne of beast, causing darkness
  - BOWL 6 - poured on Euphrates, water dried up, prepare for Armageddon
  - BOWL 7 - poured on air, lightning, earthquake splits city in 3, all cities collapse, no more islands or mountains, 100 lb. hailstones, Babylon identified and judged, God's enemies destroyed, Satan bound for 1000 years

## **Introduction**

There is an endless variety of theories about the meaning of the apocalyptic writings. Many have some validity and scriptural support, but none seem to fit precisely. It is therefore unwise and presumptuous to dogmatically state that one has THE correct interpretation of the symbolism. Those who insist upon having this one correct view forget that such precision is not possible in a vision. One also cannot accuse those holding differing views of being deceitful, insincere, closeminded, or stupid. It is quite normal and acceptable for true believers to honestly disagree about the meanings of obscure and symbolic

passages. So understand that **the following commentary is my own opinion, and as such I do not try to pass it off as the only possible interpretation.** We must all have good reasons for believing as we do, and I recognize the right and responsibility of other fallible humans to have good reasons for their beliefs too. Disagree if you must, but have good reasons for doing so!

The timing of events over the 7 years is hard to pin down. Consider the following difficulties:

Regarding the two witnesses ([11:1-13](#)), the fact that the whole world will see them suggests that global communications (satellites, internet) are still functioning, an unlikely prospect at the end of the Tribulation. Also, when the witnesses are killed after 3.5 years people send each other gifts, another unlikely scenario at the end of the Tribulation.

According to Daniel's prophecy, the Antichrist will not claim to be God until the middle of the Tribulation, so statements regarding the worship of the beast would only apply after that time. But this is not mentioned in Rev. until [Chap.13](#), after the 7th trumpet sounds. This is when the beast enforces "the mark", and when believing Israel will flee to Petra for 3.5 years ([12:6](#)).

The "blood flowing" of [14:20](#) (trumpet 7) seems to describe the Battle of Armageddon, which doesn't happen until the 6th bowl ([16:16](#)).

It's quite possible that trumpet 7, being the end of the middle set of judgments, marks the middle of the Tribulation. This, then, would be the timing of events:

After the Rapture the seal judgments begin (war, disease, economic collapse, celestial disturbances), and then the trumpet judgments (natural disasters, 144,000 witnesses, locusts) fill the first half of the Tribulation. At the 6th seal the Antichrist had guaranteed peace to Israel to signal the beginning of the Trib., using the world religion to consolidate his power. At the middle of the Tribulation (the end of the Trumpet judgments), he throws off the religion and declares himself to be God. The world is given the mark, but believing Israel flees to the safety of Petra. Then the dreaded bowl judgments begin, signaling the end of the Antichrist and the beginning of the Millennium.

There is an excellent article (book) at **Link 1\*** which is the best study I've ever seen on the Book of Revelation. It makes a very good case for treating the Seals as a period of 3.5 years between the Rapture and the Tribulation,

with the Trumpets comprising the first half and the Bowls the second. I made a chart at **Link 2\*** to try and illustrate the sequence of events. The author also has a summary at **Link 3\***.

*\* See end of document for links.*

## Chapter 1: Prologue

The time is near ([v. 3](#); see also [22:10](#))! Even though nearly 2000 years have passed since this prophecy was written, God says it's going to happen soon. This is known as the principle of imminence, meaning Jesus could have returned at any time after his ascension. Paul calls it "the blessed hope" ([Titus 2:13](#)). The fact of imminence motivated first century believers, as it should motivate us, to live their lives in such a way that they would not be embarrassed if Jesus came immediately ([Mark 13:34-37](#), [2 Peter 3:11-12](#)). But why has it been so long? [2 Peter 3:8-9](#) tells us that Jesus is waiting for people to repent, but of course, he won't wait forever.

It should be noted that where the Bible says "soon" it may in fact mean "suddenly". Jesus' return would be like a thief, whose arrival is never announced beforehand nor expected. Thieves do their work suddenly and quickly, coming and going unseen.

In [verse 8](#) Jesus introduces himself as the "alpha and omega" and as the one who "was, is, and is to come". These terms show him to be eternal, living, and returning. He then tells John to write down what he is about to see and send it to seven churches.

According to two different commentaries, the 7 spirits (or sevenfold spirit) refer to the Holy Spirit, since 7 is the number of perfection and completeness. The number 7 is found 54 times in the book of Revelation! The lamp stands could signify two things: the great difference in brightness between a lamp and the unapproachable brightness of Jesus, and the fact that there was nothing between the lamps and Jesus, meaning there is no hierarchy between the churches and Jesus. No one comments on why angels are represented by stars.

## Chapters 2—3: Letters to Churches

### **Ephesus:**

Who were the Nicolaitans? According to Dave Breese, "Nicolaitans" means "the subjugation of the people" and refers to legalistic religious systems that seek to control outward behavior. Others say it means Balaamites, so they were believers who compromised their faith in order to enjoy some of the sinful practices of Ephesian society. Whichever they were, Jesus hates their deeds. What Jesus wants this church (and all but two of the others) to do is repent.

### **Smyrna:**

This is one of the two churches for which Jesus had no criticism. The second death is eternal separation from God, which is "spiritual death" (of course, spirits don't "die", so this is just a descriptive term).

### **Pergamum:**

Verses 14-15 make a distinction between Baalamites and Nicolaitans, which is why I lean toward Dave Breese's definition of Nicolaitans in the letter to Ephesus.

### **Thyatira:**

This church is criticized for tolerating someone who leads people into sin. Church discipline must be carried out, even if it will cause turmoil in the church. Churches today are too willing to look the other way.

### **Sardis:**

I believe this church is descriptive of churches today, because so few Christians are really expecting Jesus to return physically, "like a thief". Although there are individual exceptions, Jesus has nothing good to say to this church.

### **Philadelphia:**

This is the only other church for which Jesus had no criticism. [Verse 10](#) is a good one to use when defending the pre-Tribulation rapture view, because it shows that the church will not suffer God's wrath.

## Laodicea:

According to Dave Breese, "Laodicea" means "the voice of the people" and can denote a "democratic" church where the focus is on individual rights. Like the church at Sardis, Jesus had nothing good to say to them. But notice [verse 19](#): Some people today say that if you are a true Christian you will not have any problems or lack anything, but this verse denies that (see also [Hebrews 12:8](#)).

Although these were all real, historical churches, they could also signify stages of church history, stages of an individual church, or the characteristics of most churches just before the Rapture. They could signify all three.

## Chapters 4–5: John Goes to Heaven

In verse one John is told what must happen "after this". He just finished with the letters to the churches, so "after this" means after the church age. From this point on, the church is never mentioned except in heaven. This is another reason I believe the rapture happens before the Tribulation. Besides, the Tribulation is the culmination of God's dealings with the nation of Israel (see [Daniel 9:24-26 and 12](#)). In [Jeremiah 30:7](#) it is called the time of **Jacob's** trouble (Jacob is Israel).

Now John is given a vision of God's throne in heaven. Biblical prophets were typically shown a vision of God's glory before being given a prophecy. There is obviously a lot of symbolism here, and we could spend years speculating on their meaning. But notice the reference to lamps in [verse five](#). Here they represent the Holy Spirit. Maybe the lamps representing churches back in [chapter one](#) signify the fact that where God's people are, there is his Spirit (see [Matthew 18:20](#)). Now Jesus, the Lamb, is ready to execute judgment on the earth. It couldn't begin while Christians were still on the earth for at least two reasons: God would not judge his own Spirit, and Jesus already paid for our sins, so leaving us here to suffer judgment would mean he suffered twice for the same sins.

## Chapters 6–7: Seals

**Seal #1: the white horse**

The rider on the white horse could represent the Antichrist, since he is "bent on conquest". Christ rides a white horse later, so riding on a white horse could signify the fact that the Antichrist is impersonating Christ. The fact that he carries a bow but no arrows could mean that he poses the threat of war but doesn't wage it yet, or it could signify some type of missile warfare since the bow is a weapon of distant combat.

**Seal #2: the red horse**

This rider carries a sword, possibly signifying ground or hand-to-hand combat. Red is the color of blood, meaning war is waged and not just threatened.

**Seal #3: the black horse**

Black is the color of death, which follows logically after war. Another result of war is famine, signified by very expensive basic necessities.

**Seal #4: the pale horse**

I couldn't find any comments on what the pale color could mean, but only on the two riders. Death concerns the physical body, and Hades concerns the spirit. They were given control over only 1/4 of the earth, so their destructive powers are still being limited by God. As mentioned in seal #3, famine naturally follows war. Plague is another result, since medical help will be scarce and living conditions will be unsanitary. We also know that modern medicine can't stop everything, and many bacteria are resistant to known treatments. It is apparent that God allows the wild beasts of the earth to leave their secluded homes in forests and jungles to attack man. This could also be the result of war, since the animals' habitats might be destroyed.

**Seal #5: souls under the altar**

The souls ask God for vengeance against those who had killed them. Notice that they didn't criticize God for allowing them to be martyred, and they didn't seek their own vengeance. We would do well to remember this when we face trials. The souls are told to wait until the total number of those who would be killed as they were was reached. This shows the absolute control God has over the forces of evil, since he limits the number they can kill. By the way, God didn't rebuke the martyred souls for asking for vengeance; he only told them to wait.

## **Seal #6: the sky is falling!**

War, famine, and plague are not enough to get people's attention. Only after global and cosmic catastrophes occur do people finally admit that they are suffering the judgment of God. Even then they don't repent of their evil deeds or their rejection of God; they just want to hide.

### **The lull before the storm**

Think of how weird it will be when there is not the slightest breeze anywhere on earth. God pauses his judgment to seal his people, the Jews, so they will not be killed. The obvious contextual meaning of the groups of 12,000 each are the 12 tribes of Israel. Some cults try to make it mean other things because they think God abandoned Israel and replaced it with the church, but this is not Biblical.

While this "sealing" is happening on the earth, John is shown a multitude in white robes in heaven. He is told they are martyrs who came out of the great Tribulation. It is important when reading Revelation to remember that there are events in heaven happening at the same time as events on earth. You might wonder how the martyrs got to heaven when no mention is yet made of them being killed on earth, but remember that John is being shown a vision. God doesn't have to wait till something actually happened to show it as being already done in heaven. Also note that the Greek seems to indicate that the action is continuing, that is, "**these are they who are coming out of the great tribulation**". So these martyrdoms were still in the process of happening at this point.

## **Chapters 8–11: Trumpets and Witnesses**

I believe the seventh seal begins the seven trumpet judgments. The silence in heaven probably symbolizes the more intense nature of the judgments to come.

### **Trumpet #1: fire and ice**

The earth, trees, and grass are actually worshiped today by many people. God doesn't destroy all of it, but only a third. Even in judgment, God still shows mercy.



## **Trumpet #2: salt water woes**

Yet another object of worship is damaged. Many people think we evolved from sea creatures, yet they consider them more worthy of life than humans. Go figure.

## **Trumpet #3: fresh water woes**

Wormwood means bitter, and since people die from drinking it, it's probably poisonous.

## **Trumpet #4: God adjusts the dimmer switch**

There is no known astronomical process that would account for all the stars losing 1/3 of their output at the same time.

## **Trumpet #5: God "bugs" people**

The Abyss is a bottomless pit. How can a pit be bottomless? Think of a sphere, like a ball. Where's the bottom? It depends on how you hold it. There is no bottom, only a center and an outer limit. The locusts could be specially created animals, demons, or even some type of helicopters. Their leader is Satan, so my guess is that they are demons.

## **Trumpet #6: God gets personal**

Now all-out war is waged, on top of all the natural and cosmic disasters. Some people think the army mentioned here is China. Who else could muster 200 million troops, unless many nations combined their armies? The symbolism could mean demons or weapons of war. Notice that people still don't repent, even when they know they're evil and are suffering terribly because of it.

## **The little scroll**

The symbolism of sweet and sour could mean that God's judgments are sweet to believers, who are getting vengeance at last, and sour to unbelievers for obvious reasons.

## **The two witnesses**

The 42 months equal 3 1/2 years, half of the seven-year Tribulation. Who are the two witnesses? My personal opinion is that they are Enoch and Elijah, the only two old testament people who didn't die. Others believe they are Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets. From this and other scriptures, I believe the city mentioned here is Jerusalem. Notice that the

survivors, who are Jews, finally glorify God.

### **Trumpet #7: heaven cheers**

Notice at the end of [verse 18](#) it says God will destroy those who destroy the earth. God had told Adam to manage the earth and cultivate it, but man has abused it instead. Now God not only ruins the earth but also the people who helped ruin it.

Some people will believe anything but the obvious truth. Even when humanists are shown "impossible" things, they will not believe in the supernatural.

Destroying one third shows that God gives people more chances than they deserve. Even though God knows people won't repent, he's still proving a point to Satan— that God gives people a free will and plenty of time to make the right choice. God doesn't have to guess whether people will repent; he knows. But there are things he does here on earth just to prove things to the angels (see [Job 1](#)). As with Pharaoh, God can harden someone's heart— but only after he gives them a chance to exercise their free will. No one is predestined to choose either heaven or hell, but once the choice is made (and God determines how long we have to make that choice) God can force people to do his will, especially if they have rejected him.

## **Chapters 12–15: Woman, Beast, etc.**

The woman represents Israel (same imagery as in Joseph's dreams in [Genesis](#)). The dragon is Satan and the stars he flung to earth are his angels, the demons (see [verse 9](#)). The son the woman gives birth to is the Messiah, Jesus. The 1,260 days and the "time, times and half a time" equal 3 1/2 years, the second half of the 7-year Tribulation. The place in the desert where the Jews will be safe during that time is Petra, an ancient city carved out of stone on the south end of the Dead Sea. (Remember Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade? The place they went to where the holy grail was located is, on the outside at least, the actual city of Petra.)

According to my commentaries, the two beasts represent part of an "unholy trinity". The beast out of the sea represents Gentiles, and the beast out of the land represents Israel. These beasts combine the features of those found in Daniel's prophecy. Notice that it says the beast out of the sea **seemed to have** had a fatal wound that was healed. Some believe this means that the

ancient Roman empire has come back to life. But it could also literally mean the beast fools people into thinking he has risen from the dead, counterfeiting the one thing Christ did that no one else can. Satan and his people have been trying to learn how to raise the dead to prove that Satan is as powerful as God. Since he realizes he can't do this, he has to deceive people into believing he did it, so they will worship him as God. Besides, in [Rev. 13:14](#) it says the wound was by the sword, and ancient Rome really fell by self-destruction; the Barbarians merely pushed down the corpse.

The beast out of the earth is the false prophet. He pretends to be holy (lamb) but speaks lies (dragon). He makes everyone receive his own "seal", the mark of the beast. It is likely to be some kind of personal account number which is required to do any kind of business, and he will probably do away with cash completely. This beast is probably the actual Antichrist, since he is a Jew. The first beast is the world ruler (secular), while the second is his "prophet" (religious).

Next John is shown a vision in heaven of the 144,000 Jews who were sealed earlier. Then he sees three angels. The first spreads the gospel, whose emphasis in the Tribulation is to worship God rather than the antichrist. The second speaks of Babylon, which we will discuss later. The third tells of the eternal doom of all who have received the mark of the beast. Then another angel with a sickle harvests the earth. This refers to the Battle of Armageddon, since it takes place "outside the city (Jerusalem)". Now God is ready to pour out the last seven judgments on mankind.

## **Chapters 16—18: Bowls and Babylon**

**Bowl #1:** sores

**Bowl #2:** the sea dies

**Bowl #3:** the rivers die

**Bowl #4:** the sun gets hotter— and the people still don't repent!

**Bowl #5:** darkness— In spite of the hot sun there is darkness that, for some reason, makes people miserable. And they still don't repent!

**Bowl #6:** ready for war— Probably, China sees an opportunity to start a war,

since the dried-up Euphrates is a lot easier to cross now.

**Bowl #7:** earthquake— hundred-pound hailstones gotta hurt! (And remember, it's too dark to see the hailstones and there's no place to hide!)

## **The Great Prostitute**

She sits on many waters, committed adultery with the kings of the earth, sits on a beast, is dressed in royal colors and jewels, is drunk with the blood of the saints, is a great city, and sits on seven hills. As the text itself explains, the waters are many nations. Even though she is a city, she does business with many nations and controls them because of her great wealth. She rides on the beast, meaning she controls the world government for a while, but later it turns on her and devours her\*. Only a married person can commit adultery, so she must have once belonged to God (elsewhere in the Bible God describes Israel as committing adultery when they turn away from him to other gods). She has killed more Christians than all other governments combined throughout the church's history. She is the Babylon of [chapters 17 and 18](#) (compare [18:9](#) with [17:2](#), [18:10](#) with [17:18](#), etc.).

Who is she? She is none other than the Roman Catholic Church! Who else but the Vatican is a CITY that does things only NATIONS should do? The RCC is incredibly wealthy, with its artifacts, statues, jewels, paintings, and the many "dues" it collects from its subjects. Rome is known as "the city on seven hills". She is known for her crusades and inquisitions, which were designed to wipe out any who opposed her. She pretends to be the one true church, which is why John was so astonished to see her. He knew the church as poor, humble, and clean, but now he can hardly recognize her. No wonder the merchants mourn over her when she is destroyed. She has been responsible for much of the world's economic activity, and suddenly it is all gone. (Dave Hunt's book, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, is a well-documented exposé of the Catholic Church. With over 800 footnotes, and with many quotations from the church's own archives, he identifies it as the Great Prostitute/Babylon beyond any doubt.)

\*The beast has only been tolerating the woman, whom he hates, because he needed her to gain power. Once he has it, he no longer needs her. This shows the global power of the Catholic church and its ability to command and control its subjects.

What is the meaning of [Rev. 18:4](#) "come out of her, my people"? Some will say that it means real Christians have been a part of the RCC and must only

now leave, implying that it is possible for a real Christian to practice Catholicism, but look at the context. This is the Tribulation, and many who become believers during this time had never heard the true Gospel. This warning is to those who have come to the place of believing in the one true God and must disassociate themselves from the Antichrist. It is definitely not an endorsement of the RCC.

## **Chapters 19–20: Praise, White Horse, Millenium, etc.**

The judgments are over! The rider on the white horse is obviously Jesus, finally returning to earth as a conquering king. The armies of heaven are probably all the believers, because they are dressed in white linen, the symbol of righteous acts. The Lake of Fire is the ultimate end of all who oppose God. The first residents are the Beast and the False Prophet. Later, Satan is thrown in, and then everyone whose name is not written in the Book of Life. Hell has been a temporary holding area (as bad as it is, it still isn't as bad as the lake of fire!). The first resurrection mentioned here is not the entire first resurrection; it started with Jesus, then the Rapture, and last of all the Tribulation saints. It is not clear whether Gog and Magog are actual nations or people, or representative of the forces of evil.

Now we come to the great white throne judgment, where the unrighteous dead are judged according to their deeds. The Book of Life is opened to show that none of their names are in it; the other books contain a written record of their deeds. God is writing down everything we all think, do, and say! The believers' deeds are tested with fire (see [1 Corinthians 3:10-15](#)).

## **Chapters 21–22: Everything Is New**

Now God brings the New Jerusalem down from heaven and apparently moves the center of his existence with it. The bride of the lamb is now composed not only of church-age saints but also the believing Jews. The city is an enormous cube of about 1500 miles! Everything in the new creation is perfect and of the highest quality. Even gold, the best the old earth had to offer, is used as construction material! I think [verses 10-11](#) speak of the fact that there is no longer any opportunity to change one's moral state. The unbelievers in the

lake of fire will be stuck there forever, hating God, his people, and each other. Believers will never again have their faith tested or have any more sorrow or pain.

Knowing the ultimate end of the present universe and our place in the new one should encourage and motivate us to live for heaven, not earth

([Matthew 6:20](#)).

**Links:**

**1-** <http://www.thepropheticyears.com/The%20book%20of%20Revelation/index.htm>

**2-** <http://theology.fether.net/images/tribchart.pdf>

**3-** <http://thepropheticyears.com/reasons/chronology.htm>