

# The Herald Of Christ's Kingdom

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## The Book of Revelation

### In the Beginning

*Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.—Revelation 1:3*

Reading and hearing the words of the book of Revelation are easy. Understanding the words is another matter because scholars do not agree about the details. Keeping the “things which are written” is perhaps the most difficult for the Lord’s footstep followers, especially during times of intense persecution from the enemies of the church.

This issue of The Herald looks at some of the major themes found in this book. These include the seven messages to the churches (chapters 2 and 3), the opening of the seven seals (chapters 5 to 7), the sounding of the seven trumpets (chapters 8 to 11), and the seven last plagues (chapter 16). The messages, seals, and trumpets all describe the events of the Gospel age which began in John’s day. The seven last plagues describe the events occurring at the end of the age, the period in which we are now living.

Our verse-by-verse study examines the events described in chapter 12, a transition chapter between descriptions of the events of the entire age and the events that end this age. By itself, chapter 12 is a brief summary of everything that would happen from John’s time to the full establishment of the kingdom.

One article discusses the symbols of the beast, false prophet, and dragon which appear together in chapter 16. The beast and the false prophet symbolize false religious systems and are destroyed in chapter 19. The dragon, a symbol of the state or civil power, is restrained and not destroyed until the end of the 1,000-year kingdom described in chapter 20.

Although imperfectly understood through the years, the book of Revelation has been a comfort to the true church. Even a superficial reading shows that evil systems will eventually be destroyed and righteousness will triumph.

These articles represent the best thinking of their various authors. We send them forth with the hope they will be a source of blessing and encouragement to you all.

## Revelation 2-3

# The Seven Messengers

*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.—Revelation 2:7*

Jim Parkinson

The seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 are shown also as seven lampstands (1:12,20). Just as the Menorah, or seven-branched lampstand, in the tabernacle and temple was wrought from one piece of gold (Exodus 25:31), so the seven lamps, or seven churches, signify the whole of the true church. But who are the seven messengers to the seven churches and what are their messages?

We are introduced to the seven messengers in Joshua chapter six where the army of Israel marches around the walled city of Jericho on seven successive days, accompanied by seven priests blowing seven trumpets. The Israelites are under the direction of Joshua (the Greek form of the name is Jesus; Joshua is, appropriately, a type of Jesus Christ). The priests served as Joshua's messengers, successively blowing the trumpets, one day after the other, throughout Jericho's last week, which week is a type, or foreshadowing, of the entire Gospel age.

In the book of Revelation this theme of the seven messengers is expanded upon, with the seven messengers (Greek, angels, which means messengers, whether spirit or human) blowing the seven trumpets (Revelation 8 to 11), and the seven messengers giving messages to the seven successive days, or periods, of the true church (Revelation 2 and 3). The seven messengers correspond to the seven priests at Jericho. Just as the priesthood is associated with human Christians and not angels of the heavenly realm, so the seven messengers are to be found among leaders of the true church of Christ. Just as the priests blew the trumpets on successive days marching around Jericho, the seven messengers speak to successive periods of the church throughout the Gospel age. This succession of Gospel age periods will be the same for these seven messages as for the seven trumpets of Revelation 8 to 11.

If we are to identify the seven messengers throughout the Gospel age, we must first see how this age is divided in time. We would expect each messenger to 1) deliver the message to his period of the church in Revelation 2 and 3, and 2) begin his activity at the beginning of the period (to be a messenger for the whole period). Christian history readily divides the Gospel age into these seven distinct conditions:

Name	Circumstances	Approx. Dates
1. Ephesus	Under the Jews	33-69
2. Smyrna	Under Heathen Rome	69-313
3. Pergamum	Under Imperial Rome	313-539
4. Thyatira	Under Papal Rome	539-1517
5. Sardis	Reformation	1517-1648
6. Philadelphia	Protestant Missionary	1648-1874
7. Laodicea	Harvest Separation	1874-???

1. *"I know thy works and thy toil but thou didst leave thy first love"*<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of the church, Jesus Christ told Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19, author's translation). Peter unlocked the kingdom of heaven first to the Jews on Pentecost, and then to the rest of the world with the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 2:1-40; 10:1-48). Peter's counsel to be "fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins: using hospitality one to another without murmuring" (1 Peter 4:7-9) answers well to the message to the first period of the church: "Thou didst leave thy first love. Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works" (Revelation 2:4,5). Thus, Peter would logically be the messenger to the first (Ephesus) period of the church.<sup>2</sup>

2. *"Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer"*

The second period saw Christians tortured and slain under heathen Rome. Ignatius of Antioch (fed to the lions in Rome, 108 A.D.) exhorts, "I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread of Christ. Rather entice the wild beasts that they may become my tomb, and leave no trace of my body, that when I fall asleep I be not burdensome to any. Then shall I be truly a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world shall not even see my body. Beseech Christ on my behalf, that I may be found a sacrifice through these instruments. I do not order you as did Peter and Paul; they were apostles, I am a convict; they were free, I am even until now a slave. But if I suffer, I shall be Jesus Christ's freedman, and in him I shall rise free."<sup>3</sup> As messenger to the second (Smyrna) period of the church, Ignatius set a good example in his own martyrdom of how a persecuted Christian should conduct himself.

3. *“Thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam [for gain]”*

At the beginning of the third period Emperor Constantine ended the official persecution of Christians by Rome and moved the capital of the empire to Byzantium in Thrace (renaming it Constantinople). From the beginning the puritanism of Arius was famous; in 313 A.D. he is already pleading for a restoration of primitive purity to an Alexandrian church going worldly. The worldly element could hardly accuse the man of being too pious, but after five years they codified a new concept of the nature of God and accused Arius of heresy against it. Arius was variously banned and recalled by the emperor (as was alternately his archenemy Athanasius). Arius defended the teaching that Jesus Christ was created by God, is the son of God, and is himself a god subordinate to the Father.<sup>4</sup> Coming back from his last recall in 336 A.D., his enemies poisoned him and he died (the Athanasians called it the righteous judgment of God). Thus, Arius would appear to be the messenger to the third (Pergamum) period of the church.

4. *“Thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess”*

The period of Papal Roman domination opens with a young man having been baptized in approximately 536 A.D., and then mightily defending the doctrine that there was one nature in Christ, the human, while he was here on earth—a teaching called Monophysite (mono-physis, one nature). As a Syrian monophysite, Jacobus Baradaeus (James, the Ragedy, because he spent his efforts on Christian work and not clothes) was now excluded by the largest body of professed Christians; in his activity he ranged from Egypt to Babylon and consecrated 80,000 bishops.<sup>5</sup> “As many as ... know not the deep things of Satan ... I cast upon you none other burden” (Revelation 2:24).

5. *“Establish the things that remain, which were ready to die”*

The Reformation began in 1517 with Martin Luther tacking up his 95 theses on the church door at Wittenberg, protesting forgiveness through the sale of indulgences rather than through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. “Jesus Christ died for every man” remains a Lutheran watchword to this day. Said Luther, “When people shall be resurrected, it will seem to Adam and to the old fathers as though they had been living only half an hour before.”<sup>6</sup> In later years Luther translated the Bible into German.

6. *“Thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word”*

After the Thirty-Years War (1618-1648), when Protestants were seldom threatened with mass execution, many turned their efforts to carrying the Bible and its loving message to the rest of the world. Principles of Christian love were emphasized over intellectual assent to one creed or another. Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705) in Germany, the father of the Pietist movement, delivered just such a message. And departing from what had become Lutheran orthodoxy, he considered regeneration necessary for the true theologian, and expected the conversion of the Jews and the fall of Papacy as the prelude of the triumph of the church.<sup>7</sup> Little criticism is spoken to the Philadelphia period of the Christian church.

## 7. *“Thou ... knowest not that thou art the wretched one”*

The harvest is the final period of the Gospel age; it is a time of separation when the Lord calls his people to come out of Babylon (Jeremiah 51:6-9; Revelation 18:1-5). The centerpiece of Pastor C.T. Russell’s worldwide presentations was that Jesus Christ died once for all, and that therefore all will benefit from that death. The thousand-year kingdom of Christ is for resurrecting all the world’s billions and restoring them to the perfection lost in Eden. Prophecy was studied to determine what we should be doing today: “Deliver your loving testimony to the goodness and wisdom of the Lord’s great plan of the ages, and, wisely and meekly giving your reasons, publicly withdraw from them” [i.e., from organizations practicing the sins of Babylon].<sup>8</sup>

### Seven Lessons for Our Day

We may each draw modern-day lessons from the messages of the seven messengers in the Ephesus to Laodicean periods:

1. Put priorities straight. If, for example, knowing whether the thousand years begins with our Lord’s return or with the completion of the church seems more important than telling people what the thousand years will do for them—then one’s priorities are backwards.
2. If someone threatens you with eternal torture because you cannot conscientiously agree with him, take it patiently.
3. Do not profess “None of self, and all of Thee” when you really want “Some of self, and some of Thee.”
4. Do not insist others do it your way. Do not feel challenged when they don’t. It is better to lose a would-have-been battle, than to rule with an iron fist and lose your Christian life.
5. First, harmonize all Scriptures on a subject, then say, “This is truth.”
6. Desire and try to do your part, and help others do their part, in presenting this gospel of the kingdom in all the world.
7. It is vital to see one’s own shortcomings to see the need of Christ’s merit. Salvation depends upon one’s relationship to Christ, not upon an acceptability to even the best man-made institution.

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<sup>1</sup>. Scriptural quotations are from the American Standard Version (1901)

- <sup>2</sup>. Other possibilities for the first messenger would include James (as presiding over the early church); John (whose message of godly love is evident throughout, and who lived to the end of the period; and Paul (1 Corinthians 13, though he would have been a messenger for only half the period.)
- <sup>3</sup>. Ignatius' epistle to the Romans IV. Other suggestions for the second messenger are John and Timothy. Polycarp and Papias could also be considered.
- <sup>4</sup>. From Adrian Harnack, "History of Dogma," Vol. IV, p. 20. "The passages cited so frequently later on by the Arians, [Deuteronomy 6:4, 32, 39, Proverbs 8:22, Psalm 45:8, Matthew 12:28, Mark 13:32, Matthew 26:41, 28:18; Luke 2:52, 18:19, John 11:34, 14:28, 17:3, Acts 2:37, 1 Corinthians 1:24, 15:28, Colossians 1:15, Philippians 2:6*f*, Hebrews 1:4, 3:2, John 12:27, 13:21, Matthew 26:39, 27:46, etc.,] were probably already used by Arius himself," "The idea of the subordinate God is indeed as old as the theology of the Christian Church" (Vol. III, p. 135). And "the puritanism of Arius is, of course, famous" (Vol. III, p. 141, footnote 2.)
- <sup>5</sup>. Beginning with the Thyatira period, the call "He that hath an ear" is on the outside of the message just as Jacobus was outside the mainstream. Other suggestions for the fourth (Thyatira) messenger include Peter Waldo (late 12<sup>th</sup> century) and John Wycliffe (1328-1384), either requires centuries of delay in the starting of the period.
- <sup>6</sup>. Sermon on the Gospel of Luke 16, "Of the rich Man and poor Lazarus", *D. Martin Luther's Werke*. Vol. XII, p. 592 (June 7, 1523) (in German). Concerning the nature of God, and dogmatism, Harnack quotes Luther. "'The Arians had wrong views with regard to the faith, they were nevertheless *very right* in this ... that they required that no profane and novel word would be allowed to be introduced into the rules of faith.' In like manner he objected to and rather avoided the terms 'Dreifaltigkeit,' 'Dreiheit,' 'unitas,' 'trinitas' (threefoldness, threeness, oneness, trinity)." "The history of dogma comes to a close with Luther." (History of Dogma, Vol. VII, p. 225, 226, 268.) Other possibilities for the fifth (Sardis) messenger include Andreas Bodenstein [Carlstadt] (1480-1541) John Oecolampadius (1482-1531), and John Wycliffe (a choice that would require a much earlier start for this period).
- <sup>7</sup>. *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1886 edn.). Others suggested as the sixth (Philadelphia) period of the church include George Fox (1624-1691), William Penn (1644-1718), Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), John Wesley (1703-1791), Joseph Wolff (1796-1862), and William Miller (1782-1849), the latter two would imply a very short period.
- <sup>8</sup>. *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. III (1891), p. 184.

## Revelation 6-8

# The Seven Seals

*And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.—Revelation 5:1*

Frank Shallieu

The seals about to be broken by the risen Lord are none other than those affixed to the document seen earlier, as held fast, and as kept secret, in the hand of the Almighty One (Revelation 5:1). The initial disclosure of the contents of the scroll pertains to what the future would hold in store for God's elect; that is, it is the shocking revelation of the then soon-to-come aberrant behavior of the professed Church of Christ during the gospel dispensation.

The vision of this prophetic scroll clearly indicates (a) the Creator's foreknowledge of history prior to fulfillment and (b) his intention to assure the faithful that no matter how surprising the developments about to arise, somehow behind all of them an ultimate benefit would accrue. It is important to realize that since these appalling circumstances do not originate with Divinity, they do not involve consequent moral responsibility on the part of Deity. Nonetheless, the subsequent tolerance and unchecked continuance of the evils, about to be unveiled by the Master, can be seen as the providential testing and proving ground for the development of the true Church and its worthiness to share future honors, power, and glory. The revealment of the sealed mystery is observed to occur in seven successive steps.

### **The First Seal (A.D. 33–323)**

#### **The white horse, bow, and crown -- Revelation 6:1,2**

The breaking of the seals and the ensuing events relate to the Lord's permission (but not his sanction) of evil in the Church. In a spiritual sense a "horse" represents a doctrine or a teaching. Since the color white usually denotes purity, truth, or righteousness, the first impression rendered is that in some manner the white horse indicates a satisfactory state of affairs—whatever the interpretation given. Yet there are extenuating circumstances connected with the vision which teach otherwise.

It is to be observed that the next three horses (verses 3 to 8) are of obvious evil import. Does not this suggest the possibility that all four, including the first horse, are of a foreboding and threatening nature? To carry this reasoning further, there exists evidence that the unidentified personages on the first three horses (verses 2, 4, and 5)—those entering and disappearing off the scene—are one and the same. They must be seen to somehow identify with the last or fourth mysterious horseman, the one whose "name . . . was Death." The horse and the rider are the same in all four instances but viewed, as it were, in succeeding time frames in a variety of colors, differently armed and postured.



The expression, either made or inferred, that there “was given unto him” (verses 2, 4, 5, and 8) a crown, a great sword, a balance scale, or power to destroy implies that the subjection over others—allowed to each of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse—lacked divine approval.

The activity of the white horse and its rider embraces both the Ephesus and Smyrna periods of church history, a time when Christian doctrine remained relatively pure. In Ephesus the defiling influence applied to an individual here and there, but was rejected by the majority. In Smyrna this same influence increased to embrace a congregation or group of individuals here and there.

In the early Church the bulk of the professed followers of the Master were honest and sincere, but there coexisted a troublesome minority who entertained unholy ambitions. Whenever illicit deeds secretly spawned surfaced, they were not tolerated but were promptly exposed, even as Paul admonished the doers of such deeds: “Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us” (1 Corinthians 4:8). In fact, the mysterious rider of the white horse was identified as none other than the “mystery of iniquity,” which the apostle declared in his day “doth already work” (2Thessalonians 2:7).

The rider of the first horse is already in possession of “a bow,” and it is the unauthorized use of this article of warfare that is inferred. The bow is a long-range weapon of stealth, revealing the long-term objective of a conniving and grasping clerical element desirous of earthly honors and emoluments, which are represented in the “crown.”

“Be thou faithful unto death [first], and [then, afterwards] I will give thee a crown of life,” promised the Master to his loyal band of followers while others, professing his name illegally, usurped this authority at the conclusion of the very time period in which this advice was particularly applicable (Revelation 2:10).

The inglorious day of conquest occurred when Constantine surrounded himself with Christian bishops, freed the clergy from oppression and taxation, permitted legacies to be left to them for religious purposes, and spent large sums of money to build churches.

In the portrayal of the opening of the first four seals, the different equine colors seem to depict not merely the deterioration of doctrine in the Church, and the infusion of error, but perhaps—and more important still—an additional thought. As the circle or the wheel is a symbol of industry and progress, so each horse in the spectacle John witnessed is representative of a time-frame reference, the color of each horse furnishing a clue as to what period of the rider’s activity is being referred to. The white horse of the first seal would refer to the early Church of the first three centuries, before the apostasy or great falling away took place.

The permission of evil in the Church can now be seen to be the invaluable proving or testing ground furnished the true soldiers of the Cross for the exercise of their faith in their Maker under circumstances of doubt and conditions of duress. The mystery rider of

the various horses is revealed in gradual stages: first under the guise of clericalism, then in an illicit authoritarian church hierarchy, and finally, to be seen later, in the Papacy itself—the Antichrist.

### **The Second Seal (A.D. 323–539)**

#### **The red horse and the sword -- Revelation 6:3,4**

More properly, the Greek word *purrhos* should have been translated “fiery red,” a color that is associated with the flamen pagan priesthood of Rome. The flame-red horse indicates the infusion of heathen philosophy into the body politic of the professed Church of Christ. It also points out the time period characterizing the second seal, which began when Christianity was adopted as the religion of the empire in A.D. 323. From this time forward, the pagan priesthood prudently converted to the new faith, bringing into the Christian Church many of the heathen superstitions, practices, and doctrines. In fact, paganism disappeared from without the Church in the exact proportion that it now appeared within it. Strife for positions of influence in the new religion of the empire arose between the so-called orthodox hierarchy of the Christian faith and the new inductees of the former flamen priesthood. The bishop of Rome was made Pontifex in A.D. 378, thereby appropriating to himself all the prerogatives of the pagan priesthood as well as retaining many of their false doctrines and practices.

The professed Church was also torn asunder over the doctrine of the Trinity, between the sympathizers of Arius, the reformer, and those of Athanasius, the defender of orthodoxy. All Christian communities were agitated and exasperated by the torturous and sometimes elusive arguments about the nature of God. However, most of the Trinitarian advocates characteristically accused their antagonists of mean and secondary motives in a manner that clearly betrayed their own base spirit. Such felt the necessity for a definitive dogma to preserve the unity of the faith as they saw it, and their efforts led to character assassinations, riots, and banishments. The weapons of excommunication were forged in this period and dogmas established. Thus the change made by Constantine in the status of the Church raised vexing problems that troubled the peace of the realm.

The era of the second seal brought to light a bitter political rivalry and controversy in the Eastern World between the patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople, until the latter gained the ascendancy among the primates. On the other hand, in the West, the authority of the bishop of Rome was uncontested because there were no other cities of great importance, and the emperor in distant Constantinople did not have sufficient authority or power to dampen the ardor and aspirations of the western pontiff. Accordingly, he exercised immense political influence at home and possessed considerable prestige abroad.

The legal triumph of the Roman Church over paganism, over rival patriarchs, and over all so-called heresy—a triumph that began in Constantine’s day and was finalized under Justinian in A.D. 539—completed its evolution from a persecuted sect to a persecuting state Church.

The “great sword” (*machaira*) given to the mystery rider was a heavy-duty weapon contoured, if necessary, to hack or bludgeon through an opponent’s defense. Its effectiveness in crushing the enemy depended more upon machete-wielding energy and brute strength. Jesus exhorted his followers to join the ranks of Antipas, the faithful martyr class of this period, and to decry the spirit of patriarchal rivalry, particularly that which was headquartered in Rome, the seat or throne of Satan (Revelation 2:13).

### **The Third Seal (A.D. 539–1367)**

#### **The black horse and the balances – Revelation 6:5,6**

The black horse signifies doctrinal darkness or error. But since this symbol is coupled with a rider carrying a pair of balances, an additional thought is conveyed to indicate a state of scarcity, bread by weight being a curse (cf. Leviticus 26:26; Revelation 6:6). Therefore, the black horse also denotes a time period of prevailing famine (Lamentations 4:8; 5:10).

The expression “a pair of balances” is a translation of the sole word *zugos*, which in its primary sense means “a yoke” and is thus rendered everywhere else in Scripture. Of course the choice of this word is intended to identify the type of measuring device employed, namely, a yoke-beam balance scale. Might not the thought of a yoke scale be also intended to indicate a prevailing condition of oppression and servitude?

This wretched circumstance, like that of Job, did not escape divine notice but was foreseen and permitted as a test. The scale held aloft by the mystery rider shows that the horseman had complete custody over the food rationing about to take place. Before the significance of this verse can be interpreted, a definition of the terminology employed is essential.

A “measure” (Greek *choenix*) denotes a small quantity containing approximately 1 pints of dry measure (see Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Holy Bible). “Wheat” is a symbol both of God’s elect (Matthew 3:12; 13:30) and of their food (Psalm 81:13,16; 147:11,14). A “penny” (Greek *denarius*) is a just wage for a day of labor (Matthew 20:1-16). “Three measures” signifies error being more prevalent than truth, reminiscent of the leaven which that woman Jezebel used in adulterating three measures of meal (Matthew 13:33). “Barley” is a common food that is sometimes associated with an adulteress (Hosea 3:1,2) or that is linked with the jealousy offering of a wife under suspicion of infidelity (Numbers 5:15). “Oil” represents the holy spirit. “Wine” denotes the joy and love of the truth.

By combining all these terms from a natural standpoint, one is able to sense the thrust of the vision. This insight, in turn, assists in understanding the spiritual application.

The rider of the black horse, in a time of scarcity, carries a scale in his hand to ration grain that is for sale at an exorbitant price considering the proportional amount of meal obtained, especially the wheat. After a hard day of labor, a man is able to procure only a scant daily provision of wheat, the bare subsistence level of food allowed a slave, without

any surplus for his family. Therefore, the servant is forced to purchase the barley, instead of the wheat, in order to feed the other hungry mouths.

A condition of want is described under the third seal, affecting in this instance the whole of Christendom. It is a condition not of material deprivation, but of spiritual need—“not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord” (Amos 8:11, 12). Yet the faithful Elijah class of this black horse era, though not finding an abundance of Scripture available, nonetheless fared better than did others. Instead of a diminution of benefit, the “no frills” life-support system furnished for the Lord’s people seems to have had the opposite effect.

The comfort and consolation of the holy spirit (the oil), and the love of the truth with its exhilarating, compensatory joy (the wine), appear to have disproportionately far outweighed their meager provision of food (Psalm 37:16).

### **The Fourth Seal (A.D. 1367–1517) The pale horse, Death, and Hell – Revelation 6:7,8**

The second part of this verse should be rendered: “His name that sat on him was Death, and the grave [Greek hades] followed him.”

The Greek word *chloros*, used to describe the color of the fourth horse, is translated “pale” in the majority of New Testament versions. This word occurs only four times in Scripture. In the three other instances, it is rendered unequivocally as “green” since it is associated with the color of grass. But in verse 8 the translators designated the horse as simply “pale” without reference to any specific color. The inference is that the animal was somewhat of an off-shade whitish hue, no clue being given as to whether there was a tinge of green or yellow. Some translators prefer to think of the horse as ashen, a color more easily identifiable with death. Others, however, qualify the color as “deathly pale” (Jerusalem Bible) or “sickly green” (Phillips Modern English).

While the horse should properly be regarded as pale, sickly green in appearance, yet both horse and rider were soon seen to inflict great havoc upon others. The rider used the animal to pursue and destroy what it considered to be the enemy. In fact, so successful was the horseman’s endeavor that he was aptly named Death. Why was this appellation used? The color of the horse not merely signifies its death-dealing activity against opponents, but also exposes a self-contained, inherent malady that portends an eventual fate (not here delineated) similar to that being meted out to others—ultimate retribution.

This vision seems to indicate that both the leadership and the doctrine of the orthodox Church were directed against an unnamed and despised foe deemed (erroneously) as heretical (John 16:2). The very exposure of a latent disease in the body politic of the Church by the advocates of reform infuriated the rider to rally his forces against such informers. The spirit of the mystery rider was reflected in the body of the horse, in the church doctrine, which figuratively was blanched white with frustration and anger, hurt to

the “quick,” stung with the reproach of “heretical” reporting that disclosed the identity of the false Church as Antichrist (otherwise designated as Death).

Only one personage, one rider, was named Death, only a single individual was pictured on horseback, being referred to as “his [not their] name that sat on him” (verse 8a). The context indicates that the rider, Death, was the causal factor in the carnage and that hades followed in the wake of Death. To express the matter another way, the rider and his horse proceeded forth, and a graveyard of destruction was left behind.

Viewed in this light, the details blend into a harmonious whole. The vision declares that “power was given . . . over the fourth part of the earth.” There were four parts or four major divisions of Christendom during the fourth seal; namely, (1) Spain and Portugal; (2) England; (3) France, Burgundy, and Italy; and (4) Germany and the House of Hapsburg. Of these divisions, the scene and activity described in verse 8 relate to England primarily. It was there that the spiritual warfare occurred.

The power was used “to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.” The afflictions visited upon the hapless victims during the fourth seal were executed without mercy as though they were judgments by divine appointment.

A further remarkable coincidence took place to mark this period: a ravaging, literal pestilence known as the “Black Death.”

### **The Fifth Seal (A.D. 1517–1789)**

#### **The souls under the altar -- Revelation 6:9-11**

These verses, describing the souls of those under the altar who were crying with a loud voice for the avenging of their shed blood, their death, clearly address the first incidence of murder recorded in the Old Testament (Genesis 4:3-11). In fact, a close scrutiny of the Genesis account sheds considerable light upon the significance of the lesson embodied in the fifth seal. Back there brother Cain slew brother Abel; but here in the Apocalypse the analogy and enigma being presented are of a persecuting Church inflicting punishment upon a persecuted Church. In the distant past, the first-born Cain was moved with jealousy and envy against innocent Abel; in the Revelation account, the time-honored nominal Church is stirred with anger against what it considers to be a late-coming, dissident (though in reality a peace-loving) membership.

The voice and the blood of verse 10 bear a striking similarity to the voice and blood of Genesis 4:10. That the voice is not to be taken in a literal sense as the anguished cry of the deceased is discerned in that both symbols (the voice and the blood) have a spiritual significance depicting retributory justice—i.e., justice which demands satisfaction and punitive judgment for a violation of life-rights. The blood at the bottom of the altar indicates a martyred class. Those of this fifth period who faithfully sealed their testimony in blood were thus in line to receive the crown of life.

The reward to be given to faithful Christians previously slain (by those in nominal churchianity possessing the murderous spirit of Cain) is here designated. The Abel class is assured that white vindication robes, representing also victory togas, are secured to all thus “slain for the word of God,” even to “every one of them” maintaining their integrity and sealing their testimony in “blood”—in death (verses 9 to 11a). All such will receive a better resurrection to life (Mark 8:35,36; Luke 9:24,25) and inherit a white (pure) nature in the spirit realm.

This “rest yet for a . . . season [*chronos*, a time]” is symbolic; i.e., a period of 360 literal years is signified. In other words, the more-than-overcomers slain in Christ were appointed to a rest or sleep in death for a fixed duration of time: from the latter part of A.D. 1517 to the early spring of A.D. 1878.

### **The Sixth Seal (A.D. 1789–1878) Earthquake, sun, moon, and stars -- Revelation 6:12-17**

The “earthquake” is not a mere earth tremor or trembling, either great or small; it refers instead to a violent eruption of the lower strata of society long chafing under centuries of repression and misrule, resulting in the temporary overthrow of the established norm of law and order and its replacement with a ten-year reign of terror. This earthquake, which introduces the sixth seal, is the French Revolution (1789-1799). The fall of the Bastille was the tocsin announcing this upheaval in France.

Nearly all the ablest French scholars and writers of that day despised the Church and were unbelievers in Christianity. They consequently availed themselves of every opportunity to assail religion. Thus infidelity soon became the fashion. Many of the nobility, with amusement and pleasure, hearkened to these teachings of unbelief, which relieved them from the restraints of Christian morality. Later the court, becoming alarmed, laid a prohibition on their works, but did not dare to punish the writers themselves as they were too numerous and powerful. Notwithstanding such restriction, their writings proliferated and became one of the most powerful agents in ushering in the Revolution. These philosophers hated the religious establishment as a political institution. They were concerned not because the ecclesiastics assumed to regulate the concerns of the next life, but because they oppressively controlled the present life through their status as landlords, seigniors, tithes-holders, and administrators. The ecclesiastics occupied positions of honor, privilege, and might in a society that was to be overthrown.

The teachings of true Christianity do erode and undermine dictatorial government, and therefore, despots have invariably waged warfare against the Bible. When Papacy became the great spiritual despotism that darkened the world, the Bible was the book it hated and feared above all others. With caution this corrupt hierarchy selected a few passages about submission and obedience, which it allowed to be read to the people, while the majestic principles of equality and fraternity, upon which the moral code of the Bible is reared, were vigilantly excluded from the public mind.

In short, Christianity had two classes of vigorous assailants: (1) There were those who did not know how to discriminate between true Christianity and churchianity with its corruptions; this class considered Christianity and the Papal Church as one, and endeavored to batter down the hateful structure as a bastille of woe. (2) The second class understood Christianity to be a system that frowned upon all impurity and that continually pressed upon the mind a final judgment. Restive under such restraints, they labored for the overthrow of Christianity so that guilt might find repose in unbelief.

The sun becoming dark “as sackcloth of hair” signifies not a mere diminution of sunlight but a mournful, impenetrable darkness beclouding the earth on a clear day. This celestial disturbance recorded in the Apocalypse, a book of symbols, does not imply a literal darkening of the sun or an actual discoloration of the moon, for it is to be interpreted spiritually.

While the startling spectacle witnessed by the apostle—namely, the catastrophic quake upon the earth and the dissolution of the heaven above—is seen to have a direct cause and effect relationship, yet an additional thought is inferred. Both the disturbance below, upon the earth, as well as the disorder above it occur almost concurrently, that is, during the Revolution itself.

As the light, heat, energy, and gravity of the sun (the moon also) exert their influence upon the planet, affecting vegetation and animal life, so likewise the lessons and precepts of holy Scripture, whether properly or improperly drawn, have affected the populace. The surface of the earth represents organized society underneath religious restraint. The mountains depict autocratic, authoritarian kingdoms of earth; and the isles, republican or democratic institutional forms of government. The heavens represent the powers of spiritual control.

In the human family arrangement the sun, the moon, and the stars constitute the father, the mother, and the children, respectively (Genesis 37:9,10). With regard to earth’s rulership, the sun, the moon, and the stars would represent the king, the queen, and other governmental dignitaries, respectively.

The portion of the sixth-seal vision in which the stars of heaven are seen to fall unto the earth, primarily deals with those in the ecclesiastical realm whom the populace had previously looked up to, but who now, in the French Revolution, fell from this esteem.

Why are the falling stars likened to a “fig tree” casting “her untimely figs” when shaken of a mighty wind? Obviously, this is another figurative representation of the Revolution earthquake. Just as the Jewish nation, the fig tree (Matthew 24:32; Jeremiah 24), was the professed people of God, so the fig tree here, in antitype, is the professed gospel Church. Jesus’ cursing the fig tree at his First Advent, so that it withered in one day, indicated the soon-to-come destiny of Israel for rejecting Messiah (Mark 11:12-14,20,21).

That figs represent either good or evil individuals of the Jewish nation is clearly seen in Jeremiah 24. In the Revelation account the same is true, the representation being of

individuals of the professed Church of Christ. In this instance, however, only the nominal individuals are depicted (true Christians are excluded). The “untimely figs” suggest that though this picture closely parallels some of the events of the end time, it is but the “fore-crop” of the full and even more bitter harvest still to come.

The scenes of violence in the French Revolution were untimely, premature, for the iniquity of the spiritual Amorites was not then yet full (Genesis 15:16). To all practical purposes, the earthquake (verse 12) and the “mighty wind” (verse 13) are synonymous, both representing different aspects of the same Revolution. The “four winds” (Revelation 7:1), only when unleashed, together with still another earthquake (Revelation 8:5), portray the great Armageddon. The Revolution in France, with its wind/earthquake, serves as a prototype of that which is to occur in the near future.

From the highest to the lowest, all people in the realm were eventually affected by the reign of terror. Even those who were initially receptive to and proponents of reform became sick of the bloodshed and longed for stability and moderation of government. As time ensued, conditions evolved to such a state that all, both great and small, feared for their own safety and sought every manner of escape.

At first, security was sought within the confines of the nation, but it seemed there were as many informers as there were people. Soon attempts were made to elicit the intervention and aid of foreign governments—even for invasion by these powers—to put a stop to the revolt. This effort failing, many of the citizenry fled to other lands (“mountains,” kingdoms), seeking to lose their identity there in some haven or refuge styled “the dens.” Some tried to identify with others of foreign extraction who had notable power and influence, particularly in the military. These are “the rocks” (instead of Christ) alluded to (1 Corinthians 10:4; Matthew 7:24).

The expressions “fall on [or `over`] us” and “hide us” disclose the people’s abject humiliation; the complete abnegation of former assumed rights, titles, and privileges, if any; and the casting of their entire lot and fortune to the custodial care of others. The context seems to indicate that even those who formerly lived in unbelief now sensed, in this reversal of the state of affairs in their lives, that somehow a divine retribution for past misconduct and misdeeds was being brought to their attention. Historians verify that many in those days thought, indeed, the dread Armageddon had come.

### **The Seventh Seal (A.D. 1878- )** **Silence in heaven -- Revelation 8:1**

With the opening of the previous six seals, John witnessed startling events, but when the seventh seal is broken—the last and the most significant of a series because the others led up to it—what happens? Nothing! This example of the apostle’s patient obedience, this demonstration of loyalty—that is, his waiting in the midst of profound silence for one-half hour before the recurrence of sound and visual movement (without prior explanation or direction indicated)—to most persons would seem psychologically interminable. No doubt John sensed that the literal silence he was experiencing had some spiritual



significance. It perhaps heightened and intensified, rather than dampened or diminished, his ardor or his curiosity as to the reason for this absence of sound.

In what sense can it be said there will be a heavenly half hour of silence in the spiritual life of the Christian here on earth below during the time period of the seventh seal? It is replied: A marked sense of alienation, a feeling of want of instruction, a temporary lack of communication with God—all these sensations will be experienced by those individuals who prove not fortunate enough to be identified with the Very Elect as participants in the spirit (invisible) rapture of the last members of the Church in the flesh.

Is there a precedent in Scripture that would illustrate this point? Yes. Prior to his ascension to heaven in a cloud, Jesus told his disciples to go to Jerusalem and wait there for further instruction (a reference to receiving the holy spirit of light and understanding). The apostles heeded the admonition and went to the city, where they waited behind locked doors because they feared the Jews. They remained there for ten days—waiting. Then, in the due time, the Pentecostal descent of the holy spirit fell upon them. They heard the sound of a mighty wind, felt the house tremor, and saw tongues of fire appear on the head of each one assembled there. When this strange happening subsided, each found he could speak in some foreign tongue or dialect. The appearance of tongue-shaped flames on their heads signified that the holy spirit had given them this ability as a gift. Henceforth, this prior sign proved to be a symbol of their capability not only to speak various languages, but to do so with power and authority (John 14:26; 16:8; Acts 1:3-5, 12-14; 2:1-4). One noteworthy point should be kept in mind: The waiting period of silence and inactivity back there was punctuated, at its conclusion, by a startling and dramatic event—a demonstration of wind, shaking, and fire.

The seventh-seal silence refers to a situation somewhat similar to the closing events of the First Advent. The comparison is to the departure of the last members of the Little Flock beyond the veil of flesh while the secondary or Great Company class are left behind to await renewed strength and further investiture of the holy spirit.

When The Christ is complete, the half hour of silence will occur, preceding the earthquake. In other words, the silence will take place between the completion of the sacrifice and the Time of Trouble. It will accentuate the earthquake, and the earthquake will punctuate the silence. During this interim period, the Church will be formally presented to the Father and given their reward. After their grand entrance (2 Peter 1:11), God has a time scheduled—the exact length of which is unknown (perhaps six months more or less)—that will be a waiting period for the Great Company class.

After the Bride of Christ is complete and the wedding ceremonies have subsided, a marriage supper will be prepared. The Bride will return down here to get her bridesmaids to come to this supper, but first the Great Company have to be made ready by entering into the Time of Trouble and washing their robes white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14). They will be led into the wilderness “by the hand of a fit man” to get this experience (Leviticus 16:21). Then they will be rescued with the destruction of the flesh so that the spirit may be saved (1 Corinthians 5:5).

## Revelation 16-20

# The Beast, False Prophet and Dragon

*And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.—Revelation 16:13*

David Doran

To many the various players in the drama of the book of Revelation are mysterious and confusing. Because three of these are particularly important during the sixth plague (Revelation 16:12-16), an understanding of their identities is vital.

### The Beast

Excluding the “four beasts” of Revelation 4—which are not beasts at all; the Greek is best translated “living ones”—there are two beasts in the book of Revelation. One is commonly called the ten-horned beast (Revelation 13:1) and the other is called the two-horned beast (Revelation 13:11). Both play important parts in the history and prophecy of Christianity. Usually, however, when one refers simply to “the beast,” the ten-horned beast is meant.

The beasts as symbolic representations are complicated. An in-depth study of them would consider their heads, horns, bodies, and even their rider. But for simplicity’s sake, let us look at just the big picture. The “beast” represents Roman Catholicism, particularly in its complicated relationship to “The Holy Roman Empire” and its remnants.

In one case the beast does not represent the Roman Catholic Church, but rather the people (the body of the beast) over which that church had domination. In chapter 17 the Roman Catholic Church is shown as a rider on the beast. Such a separation was necessary to show prophetically how the people would turn on this church and destroy her; thus the picture separates the beast (the church itself) from the body of the beast (the people under the church). This beast of chapter 17 is also found in 11:7.

Revelation 13 shows some of the particulars in the history of “the Beast” (the Roman Catholic religious empire):

1. It is born out of restless turmoil (the sea), verse 1.
2. During its history it has the support of other powers (ten horns), verse 1.
3. It changes its methods of thinking and organization (seven heads), verse 1.

4. Its characteristics (names) create false impressions of God (blasphemies), verse 1.
5. Its power is shared between its supporters (diadems on horns, verse 1) and itself (power, throne, and authority, verse 2).
6. It received its power by gift from the “dragon” (civil power), verse 2.
7. It experienced a great and near-fatal challenge (wound) to its authority by the great Reformation, verse 3.
8. It dominated and persecuted true Christian efforts for 3 symbolic years, a literal 1,260-year span, verses 5 and 6.
9. During this time it was allowed to make incredible claims which dishonored and distorted the image of God, verses 5 and 6 (see also Daniel 7:8,11,25; 2Thessalonians 2:3,4).

## **The False Prophet**

The history of the false prophet is considerably more obscure. It is first mentioned in Revelation 16:13 where it appears suddenly and without introduction. Fortunately a comparison of two other texts allows us to have a reasonable certainty about its origin and identity.

Its identity is inseparably linked to the two-horned beast of Revelation 13. This two-horned beast has been reasonably identified by Bible Students as the Church of England, a non-Protestant separation from the Roman church. Chapter 13 gives us information regarding this two-horned beast:

1. Its origin, unlike the ten-horned beast, is not out of restless turmoil (sea), but out of an already-established social order (earth), verse 11.
2. It is so strongly linked to its supporting state (dragon) that its expression comes from the monarch who is considered to be its head, verse 11.
3. It is barely distinguishable in doctrine and practice from its predecessor so that it contributes to the successful healing of its predecessor, verse 12.
4. By its daring act of separation, it convinces others that separate parts of Christianity can be successful, verse 14.
5. It gets the opportunity and power to vitalize this break-away (Protestant Christianity, an image of the beast), verse 15.

These points are essential to identify the false prophet. A careful reading of Revelation 19:20 supplies additional needed information.\* The false prophet is said to have “performed the signs in [the beast’s] presence,” and to have “deceived those ... who dwell on the earth,” and to cause “a mark.” All of these things are said of the two-horned beast in 13:12-16. It is, therefore, inescapable that the two-horned beast is part of this false prophet.

It is clear that the “image of the beast” in chapter 13 is a separate entity from the two-horned beast but still closely connected to it. The two-horned beast “suggests” the making of the image and also gives it “breath.” But the image also, like the two-horned beast, simply disappears from view in Revelation; its demise is not shown. Revelation 19:20 acknowledges the place which the image played in history, but seems to dismiss it as an entity of the past. The strong implication is that the false prophet is not the two-horned beast, nor is it the image. It is the result of the two-horned beast’s giving “breath” to the image. In other words, once the false prophet appears on the scene, the Church of England and the Protestant federation of churches go off the scene as actors and are replaced by a combination of the two which becomes known as the false prophet.

This change apparently happens during the progress of the seven plagues of chapter 16. Note that the first plague (16:2) is upon those worshipping the image. By the time the sixth plague is in progress, the image has vanished, and the false prophet is functioning.

## **The Dragon**

In one sense the dragon is the least complicated symbol of these three. Bible Students are nearly unanimous in agreeing that it represents a purely civil power, a political entity rather than a religious one. It is important, however, that it be consistently maintained as a symbol. Revelation is nearly all symbols (Revelation 1:1) and much care should be taken to not read it literally. The dragon is a case in point. It is not uncommon for Bible Students to read Revelation 20 and interpret it as the binding or restraining of the literal devil. The “dragon” of Revelation 20 is not the literal devil (although he is surely involved and included in the activity described). Jesus’ parable about binding the “strong man” (Matthew 12:29; Mark 3:27) teaches us that the literal devil will definitely be bound. But that is not the subject matter of Revelation 20 which describes the binding of the symbolic devil—the dragon (civil power).

The dragon first occurs in Revelation 12 where it initially represents pre-Christian Rome (verses 3 and 7) and then as history progresses it represents the remnants of the civil power which once was Rome (verses 9, 13 and 17). In chapter 13 it is not specifically mentioned, but it is incorporated into the vast church-state empire represented by the beast. Hence there are certain correspondencies in the descriptions of the dragon in 12:13 and the beast in 13:1.

When we next meet the dragon in Revelation 16:13, he is in close cooperation with the beast and false prophet. This part of the prophecy is yet before us and should provide some colorful and exciting events to behold! Even the fallen angels will be involved (see

Revelation 16:14). Since these three entities—Roman Catholicism, Protestant Collusion, and Civil Power—are all here shown as prominent players in end-time prophecy, their destruction is of vital interest to us.

The two religious entities (the beast and false prophet) are destroyed at the close of the Gospel age harvest as recorded in Revelation 19:20. The civil entity (the dragon) is bound a thousand years and is then destroyed in the little season at the close of the Millennium (20:10) where he is once again united with the other two symbolic entities in oblivion.

Revelation 20:10 uses the name “devil” not “dragon.” This is not a weakness in interpretation but an acknowledgement of the complexity of the symbol. This symbolic dragon (civil power) is given four descriptive names when it first appears in Revelation 12:9. The same four names are applied only in one other instance, Revelation 20:2. Thus in both his first and his last appearance in this great drama, he is identified symbolically as “dragon ... serpent ... devil ... Satan.” Just as one would not question his symbolism in chapters 12 and 16, there is also no reason to switch to believing a literal devil is being described in chapter 20. The prophecy seems to show that while false religion will be abolished by the end of the Gospel harvest (19:20), civil power as a threat to men will only be restrained, not destroyed, at that time. Civil power will make a reappearance at the close of the Millennium to give man the test based on deception. The literal devil will no doubt be the instigator and power behind this civil deception, and he will meet his personal fate at that time as well (20:9). But Revelation 20 is not really about the personal devil.

Any discussion of the binding of Satan is greatly clarified when these truths become evident. The literal devil cannot be bound until the true church is complete and Satan’s religious masterpieces are destroyed. But the binding or restraining of the powers of the civil/political world need not await those events. The binding of the civil power devil (the dragon in symbol) is gradual and has been in progress since the Lord’s return. Revelation 20 makes it clear that this is a progressive, five-step, process: 1) laying hold of the dragon; 2) binding the dragon with a chain (compare Psalm 149:8); 3) throwing the dragon into an abyss; 4) shutting the abyss; and 5) sealing the abyss until the thousand years are completed. Thus the binding of “Satan” depends critically on whether one is talking about the literal devil of Jesus’ strong man parable or the symbolic devil of Revelation 20.

Through the history and prophecy of the beast, dragon, and false prophet, the Lord is showing us that the enemies of the true church and the world are, have been, and will be not just false religion, but also the selfish, power-retaining activities of the state. It is wise that all the true followers of the Master be informed and prepared.

# NEWS AND VIEWS

## Pastoral Bible Institute News

### Financial Statement of the Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc.

#### Statement of Net Worth -- April 30, 2001 [unaudited]

##### Current Assets:

Cash and Investments .....	\$141,017
Fixed Assets: .....	None
Liabilities .....	None

**NET WORTH, APRIL 30, 2001 ..... \$141,017**

#### Analysis of Net Worth

##### INCOME

Contributions .....	\$13,724
Sale of Material .....	2,264
Herald Subscriptions .....	4,627
Interest .....	6,775
Memberships .....	25
Miscellaneous Income .....	907
<b>Total Income .....</b>	<b>\$28,322</b>

##### EXPENSES

Purchase of Material for Resale .....	1,945
Printing and Reproduction .....	6,588
Postage and Delivery .....	5,507
Administrative and General .....	562
Miscellaneous .....	458
<b>Total Operating Expense .....</b>	<b>\$15,060</b>

**Net Gain for Fiscal Year ..... \$13,262**

**Net Worth, May 1, 2000 ..... \$127,755**

**Net Worth, April 30, 2000 ..... \$141,017**

Respectfully Submitted by Len Griehs, Treasurer

## PBI Annual Report for 2000-2001

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.”—Philippians 1:9,10

During the past 83 years, the work of the Pastoral Bible Institute has undergone many changes. Through times of prosperity and through difficult days, the directors of the Institute have sought to adapt their efforts to meet the needs of the brotherhood. In turn, the members and friends of the Institute have freely given prayers, encouragement, and assistance, both spiritually and temporally. We greatly appreciate this support and want to express our appreciation to the brethren for their interest and involvement in the work of the Institute.

It is not only the financial contributions which enable us to carry on our activities, but countless hours of volunteer labor in the preparation, production, and mailing of our magazine and booklets. For all of this, we sincerely say “Thank You.”

We began the year 2001 with a new look to the cover of *The Herald*. Each issue bears a full color illustration appropriate to the theme of that particular edition. This is not only to enhance the appearance of the journal, but also to make it easier to distinguish between each individual issue. This would not be possible without the freely contributed work of preparing the color separations by one of the brethren, to whom we owe a special debt of gratitude.

The circulation of *The Herald* has been roughly doubled this year due to a decision by the directors to supply free copies to ecclesias in economically depressed countries where English is widely read. We presently mail 265 copies to four ecclesias in India, 90 copies to two classes in Ghana, and 415 copies to eight ecclesias in Nigeria.

In an endeavor to encourage the use of the magazine for public witness, the directors have approved a plan to offer 100 copies free for ecclesias to use in such a manner. They also authorized any class to offer a six-month free subscription to any of the interested public. Some ecclesias have been using *The Herald* as an attractive offer in fair booths, flea markets, or in shopping malls. We have had one inquiry about providing copies for a distribution rack, similar to those used for daily newspapers.

We continue to stock a wide selection of free booklets, periodically inserting copies in *The Herald* magazine to encourage their use by our readers. Two new reprints of existing booklets are presently in production with full-color covers and tear-off postcards for responses.

*The Herald* web page continues to grow and we receive a steady response to it. There are presently over 700 items on the site and we are installing a search engine to make the

material more readily usable for research. During the coming year we plan to place more of our booklets “on line” with a button allowing the fast down-loading of the booklets by a web user. One of the members of the PBI has developed a page, accessible through our home page, where scores of Bible study helps, including all the writings of Pastor C. T. Russell, are available for download in the format of the popular On-Line Bible software. Currently this material is available for download only.

Once again, we would like to express our appreciation to all the brethren who have made the continuation of this work possible. It is our continued prayer that the activities of the PBI be always carried out with the ultimate objective of glorifying the name of our heavenly Father and as a service to those who love and serve his cause.

The Directors, Pastoral Bible Institute

## World News

### Religious

Taliban soldiers allegedly rounded up more than 500 boys and men ranging in age from early teenage to the elderly in Yakawlang—a town in central Afghanistan. Their hands were tied behind their backs; they were allegedly taken to a compound where each was shot in the head. Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar has denied that this took place. However, he banned journalists from visiting the area. The victims were members of Hazaras, a Shiite Muslim religious group. The Taliban are generally Pustun-speaking Sunni Muslims.

—Reuters, 2/19/2001

In North America, there are laws at the state, provincial and federal levels which prevent discrimination in employment, on the basis of gender, race, religion, etc. But religious groups are generally given an exemption from these laws; they can discriminate against any group on any basis. According to The Orlando Sentinel, The Holy Land Experience in Orlando, FL, requires prospective employees to sign a Christian “doctrinal statement” of belief. Not only does this discriminate against non-Christians, it also appears to exclude Charismatic, Pentecostal and liberal Christians from applying for employment to work at the \$16 million, 15-acre “living biblical museum.” Founder Marvin Rosenthal, and Independent Baptist pastor, is quoted as saying: “We are not charismatics. We love them. We appreciate them. But we would not offer them a job.”

—Strang Publications, 3/11/2001

Pope John Paul II, in a sweeping statement of regret aimed at healing Christianity’s east-west divide, begged God’s forgiveness Friday for sins committed by Roman Catholics “against their Orthodox brothers and sisters,” including the plunder of the Byzantine capital by 13th century Crusaders. His powerful and unexpected gesture came during the first visit by pope to Greece, an Eastern Orthodox stronghold, since the schism of 1054.



It drew warm applause from Orthodox clerics who until two months ago had demonized the pope and refused to welcome him. It was a papal act of mea culpa diplomacy on a par with the visit last year to Jerusalem's Western Wall, where John Paul sought pardon for centuries of Catholic torment of the Jewish people. That historic pilgrimage solidified the Vatican's relationship with Israel, furthering the pope's goal of building bridges to other faiths.

—Los Angeles Times, 5/5/2001

## Social

Census data released by China and India confirm the remarkable fact that the two Asian neighbors account for more than a third of all humanity. China boasts a population of 1.27 billion while India has 1.03 billion, official figures say. Each country has more people within its borders than existed on the entire planet about the time American revolutionaries met to sign the Declaration of Independence. Together, the two Asian giants added about 300 million people—more than live in the U.S.—to the world tally in the last 10 years. “It’s unprecedented in human history, the kind of population growth that we’ve seen during the 20th century,” said Gary Gardner, director of research at the Worldwatch Institute in Washington.

—Los Angeles Times, 3/29/2001

343,000 is 1) the amount by which the population of all European Union countries combined grew in 2000; and 2) the amount by which India's population grew in the first week of 2001.

—Time, 3/12/2001

More than 3 million people in Sudan are threatened by famine, and thousands could die, the U.N. World Food Program warned Thursday. A severe drought has added to the misery caused by an 18-year civil war and previous famines that have left 2 million people dead and more than 4 million displaced, said Massoud Hyder, the WFP's representative in Sudan. “We have a critical situation in Sudan—the WFP is running out of food at a time when we are supporting 3 million people there,” Hyder said at a news conference in London. “If you went to Sudan today, you would not see dead bodies. But it will be a lot different by July—devastatingly different.”

—Los Angeles Times, 3/30/2001

## Financial

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund could easily cancel the debts owed to them by the world's most heavily indebted poor countries without touching their financial health, according to an accountants' report. The campaigning group commissioned the report from Chantrey Vellacott, the City of London accountancy firm. It suggested that

the two organizations could immediately reduce debts of the 26 so-called Highly-Indebted Poor Countries by some \$3 billion, and after that generate a further \$1 billion a year that would retire debt and pay interest as they came due. This would allow the cancellation of the debt over the next quarter century.

—Financial Times, 4/11/2001

[Some] Poles suspect their rich German neighbors of disdaining them as the great unwashed. During the protracted negotiations to admit as many as ten countries, mostly in Central Europe, into the European Union, the applicants' suspicion that West Europeans want to keep them at arm's length has flared up from time to time. So it was no surprise that Poles and others reacted angrily this month to the news that the European Commission, the EU's bureaucracy, would propose restrictions on the free movement of labor, even after they join the EU. The commission's proposal is close to one made by Gerhard Schröder, the German chancellor. The idea is that the new members' citizens will not be allowed complete access to the western countries' job markets for up to seven years after they join the EU. The basis for West European wariness is clear, if flawed. There is an enormous wage gap between the EU's current 15 members and the would-be members—some of which are likely to join the EU as soon as 2004 or 2005. In nominal terms, average wages in the ten Central European applicants are only 14% of the average in the EU 15; even adjusted for purchasing power, the gap is stark, with Central European wages less than 40% of those paid in the EU 15. This gap has led to fears among the EU's present members of a flood of cheap labor from the east, dragging down the wages and social standards of the west.

—The Economist, 4/19/2001

## Civil

Congo's 32-month war with its neighbors has killed about three million people, according to a survey by the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Only a few hundred thousand deaths were directly attributable to the battles fought by the Congolese army, the paper said. The majority were the result of starvation, disease and deprivation in Congo and neighboring states. A further two million people were made homeless by the conflict. The estimated number of deaths are one-third higher than the death toll in 18 years of conflict in Sudan, and three times higher than the accepted estimate of 1 million deaths for the Biafran civil war in the 1960s. Congo was formerly Zaire, and has a population of about 50 million. "Things are a little worse than the picture we painted last year," said Les Roberts, an epidemiologist formerly with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention who conducted last year's IRC survey. "And last year's estimate turns out to have been low."

—Washington Post, 4/30/2001

More than 1 billion people have no access to clean water and 3.4 million die every year of diseases that could easily be remedied by better supplies and sanitation, the World

Health Organization (WHO) said Wednesday. The world's poor pay more than the rich for worse water—up to 20% of household incomes—and face a greater risk of waterborne illnesses, the WHO said during a news conference to mark World Water Day today. “In 1990, 1.1 billion people were without access to improved water—even just a covered well. In 2000, the number was the same,” said Jamie Bartram, the WHO's water, sanitation and health coordinator. He said that 2.4 billion people had no basic sanitation in 1990 and that the situation was the same in 2000.

—Los Angeles Times, 3/22/2001

Russia is aiming to regain its position as the leader in world arms sales in order to recapture influence in the Middle East, North Africa and East Asia. Under President Vladimir Putin, Moscow is attempting to reclaim arms markets that withered as Russia's military-industrial complex declined after the USSR collapsed. More than 70 percent of Russia's arms sales are to India and China, both places where the Kremlin wants to counter U.S. influence. Most of Russia's other top customers are former Soviet clients, including Algeria, Vietnam and Syria. In recent weeks, Moscow has signaled its intention to seek lucrative deals with Iran and Libya, both of which have terrorist ties, regional ambitions, and hostility toward the United States.

—Knight Ridder News Service, 3/6/2001

Living conditions for as many as 70,000 Afghan refugees crowded into a Pakistani border camp have deteriorated due to torrential rains and winds. The rains destroyed more than 3,150 shelters and flooded areas of the camp, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said in an assessment issued from Geneva. Children are bearing the brunt of the unhealthy conditions, and refugees at the camp are dying every day, the UN said. Afghans have fled drought, civil war and the threat of famine, UN official Kenzo Oshima told reporters in February. The humanitarian situation inside Afghanistan is “desperate” and aid workers say conditions are worse now than at any time during the decade-long civil war, the UN relief agency said. The drought has destroyed almost all the rain-fed crops that are vital to the subsistence way of life of 85 percent of Afghanistan's 25 million people, according to UN World Food Program officials. “Grain production has fallen in half, people have eaten their seed, sold their livestock and watched their fruit trees and vineyards die,” said John Wall, the World Bank's country director for Pakistan and Afghanistan.

—Bloomberg News, 4/3/2001

## Israel

Some 60,000 immigrants arrived in Israel in 2000, a 17 percent drop from 1999, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). Although the former Soviet Union remains the main source of immigrants to Israel, the 2000 figures showed a 40 percent drop from the previous year. Some 20 percent of the 2000 immigrants were children up to the age of 14, and some 9.4 percent were over the age of 65. According to the CBS, the

least popular region for settlement by Russian immigrants is Jerusalem, with only 8 percent going to the capital, while 15 percent, a plurality, choose Haifa as their home. Some 30 percent of western immigrants choose Jerusalem.

—Ha'aretz, 4/3/2001

Israel's first sea-water desalination plant will begin partial operations some two years from now, reaching full commercial capacity, 50 million cubic meters annually, only in 2004, said Water Commissioner Shimon Tal in the most recent report on the implementation of government decisions on Israel's water economy made less than a year ago. The plant will be built on land belonging to the Eilat-Ashkelon Pipeline Company in Ashkelon and the preparation of a detailed project outline is underway.

—IMRA, 4/2/2001

Israel is the leading exporter of flowers to Europe. This year, some 1.5 billion flowers were shipped to Europe, some 30% of the entire stock of flower imports to the continent. Kenya is in second place, providing some 20% of Europe's flower needs.

—Arutz 7, 4/3/2001

For the first time in 2,000 years, visitors to Jerusalem can ascend to the Second Temple as it stood before its destruction by the Romans in 70 CE, thanks to a virtual reconstruction opening to the public today. The project, the Ethan and Miriam Davidson Exhibition and Virtual Reconstruction Center, which links ancient stones uncovered by archaeologists with state of the art hi-tech, is located in the cellars of an Umayyad palace complex near the Dung Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem. The project was constructed by the Antiquities Authority and the East Jerusalem Development Corporation. As the visitors descend into the center, they experience the sharp contrast of ancient stones and modern building materials. A short video presentation takes them on a tour of the area leading up to the Temple, flashing back and forth between a guide in modern dress and the same guide dressed as a pilgrim in ancient times. However, the jewel of the center is an interactive computer presentation in which visitors can "go up" to the Temple, graphically walking up the steps to the Hulda Gate and actually walking into the Temple Mount precinct, where they can "walk" in the royal stoa, the one area of the Temple from which there is archaeological evidence. For those who want to visit the project from their homes, there is an Internet site: [www.archpark.org.il](http://www.archpark.org.il).

—The Jerusalem Post, 4/18/2001

## Revelation 8-11

# The Seven Trumpets

*And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.—Revelation 8:2*

David Rice

The seven trumpet blasts of Revelation 8 through 11 are seven declarations of judgment which fall on the political-religious systems which impact God's elect. These judgments are inscribed "within and on the backside" of the scroll in the right hand of God (Revelation 5:1), but as the scroll is sealed with seven seals, we are not introduced to the actual content of these judgments until "he had opened the seventh seal" (Revelation 8:1). Then, after a dramatic introductory pause, "silence in heaven about the space of half an hour," they are revealed.

That the contents of the scroll are foreboding judgments is attested by two Old Testament texts. "Written within and without [were] lamentations, and mourning, and woe" (Ezekiel 2:10). "Everyone who steals will be purged away according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears will be purged away according to the writing on the other side" (Zechariah 5:3, NASB).

Revelation 8:2 says "I saw the seven angels which stood before God," as though they appeared before in Revelation. Perhaps these seven angels, or spirits, are the same as "the seven Spirits of God" which stood before his throne (Revelation 4:5).

There are two basic frames of reference in Revelation. Chapters 1 to 3 have their setting "down here." John was on the isle of Patmos when he heard a voice behind him, and turning saw a vision of Jesus walking among the candlesticks (Revelation 1:9-12). But the scene changes in chapter 4. "A door was opened in heaven: and the first voice ... said, Come up hither" (Revelation 4:1). The remainder of Revelation has its setting "up there," through the door in heaven, in the presence of God.

The symbols change in the two locations. Jesus, for example, appears in the first three chapters as a priest tending the candlesticks, but from the throne scene onward he appears as a lamb. Similarly, the seven messengers are represented through chapter 3 as seven stars in the right hand of Jesus, but afterward the "seven stars" appear no longer and "seven lamps" appear representing "seven spirits." Perhaps they are the same class. In chapters 1 to 3 they are seven light-bearers; later they are seven spirits trumpeting God's judgments.

Before the seven angels sound, a brief episode intervenes in verses 3-5. An angel standing at the golden altar offers incense "with the prayers of all saints." This reminds us of the incense on the Day of Atonement which pictures our Lord's life yielded as a

fragrant offering to God. Without this our prayers as sons of God could not be received. That means this scene—and thus the Trumpet Judgments—begin at the opening of the Gospel age.

## **Trumpets One Through Four**

Trumpet One produced a deadly trauma, “hail and fire mingled with blood ... cast upon the earth: the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.” Earth, as distinct from sea, represents stable religious society. This judgment evidently was against the Jewish polity. In 70 A.D. Jerusalem was taken and the Jewish state broken. The green grass represents the Jewish people (“all flesh is grass,” Isaiah 40:6), and the trees the leaders among them. The half hour silence (verse one) may signify the period from the opening of the age until this first judgment.

Here, and in trumpets 2, 3, 4, and 6, a “third part” is afflicted, whereas the corresponding plague judgments of the harvest have no such limitation. In trumpet two for example, a third of the creatures in the sea died; in plague two “every” living soul in the sea died. Perhaps this indicates the seven plagues bring a finality, as compared with the judgments through the age. Whether a detailed meaning can be given to each example of a “third part” is uncertain. Perhaps it is used simply as a Gospel age number (3, 30, 300, 3000 all appear respecting our Lord’s atonement).

Trumpet Two. “A great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood.” The great mountain represents Pagan Rome. As Christianity spread, paganism weakened, and the old empire fell to Constantine (nominally Christian) at the battle of the Milvian bridge in 312. The sea represents the peoples from which Constantine drew his armies. Rome is sometimes represented by Babylon (1 Peter 5:13), which Jeremiah 51:25 said God will make “a burnt mountain.”

With the fall of Judaism and Paganism, two large impediments to Christianity were removed. Notice a parallel here to Mark 11:20-23 where Jesus cursed the fig tree (Israel), and declared that through faith even “this mountain ... [shall be] removed ... and cast into the sea,” a symbolic reference to Rome. Later representatives of both institutions assailed Jesus, when “they sen[t] unto him ... Pharisees [leaders in Israel] and ... Herodians [supporters of Rome], to catch him in his words” (Mark 12:13). They proved no match for his words, and their institutions proved no match for his power. By two trumpet blasts these enemies were removed.

In Trumpet Three the waters were made bitter, and many died as a result. The waters represent the streams of Christian truth, which after Constantine’s day became increasingly polluted. As former pagans flooded into the church nominal, the simple doctrine of Christ became confused with heathen philosophies, and a great dissension grew over the rising doctrine of the Trinity. That false doctrine caused the sweet waters of truth to no longer impart their life-giving refreshment. Arius boldly opposed these errors, and he may be the “great star from heaven” which fell upon the waters, being “deposed and excommunicated” by “one hundred Egyptian and Libyan bishops” in about

321 (McClintock and Strong, "Arianism," p. 388). The name given this star, "wormwood," signifies something harmful (Deuteronomy 29:18), and this is the view Christendom has of Arius. He is almost universally vilified to this day, though he nobly stood for the truth against staunch opposition.

Had the church remained loyal to their simple faith, and to a simple life of sacrifice, this affliction probably would not have arisen. This trumpet was a judgment not on Jews or Pagans, as the first two, but on (nominal) Christians.

Trumpet Four is similar but more severe. The degradations of the nominal host, led by the priests, bishops, and popes, caused the light of the gospel to be greatly darkened. "The third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and ... of the stars" (Revelation 8:12). The gospel (sun), the teachings of the law (moon), and the teachings of the apostles (stars) were dimmed. Christendom slipped into the dark ages with all its evils. This was the period of Waldo (about 1160), up until the Reformation would break the shackles and let the light penetrate anew.

There is a great change between the first four periods of church history and the last three. This demarcation appears forcibly in Revelation 8:13 (NIV): "As I watched, I beheld an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels."

Trumpets five, six and seven are thus three "woe" trumpets to Christendom—the Reformation, the French Revolution, and the Second Advent (with its seven plagues). The flying eagle introducing these trumpets reminds us of Hosea's warnings to nominal natural Israel: "Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law" (Hosea 8:1; Deuteronomy 28:49).

As the first four seals were recorded briefly, and the remainder at length, so the first four trumpets are recorded briefly, and the remaining three at length.

## **Trumpet Five**

"I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit" (Revelation 9:1). As Arius was represented earlier as a star fallen from the ecclesiastical heavens, so here Luther, who was a priest but was excommunicated, is cast out of "heaven." Subsequently he had great influence on the "earth," stable religious society. He was the rock whom it pleased the Lord to use as the pillar of the Reformation, and weather the many anathemas of Papacy.

He used the key to release the Scriptural doctrines long dormant in the "bottomless pit" of inactivity. These doctrines are represented as locusts with the appearance of horses. It was a time of great commotion, represented by the smoke which rose with the locusts and darkened the air, as Papacy's spiritual control of Christendom was darkened.

The locusts afflicted only those “which have not the seal of God in their foreheads,” just as the renewed influence of the Scriptures afflicted nominal Christians. The locusts had tails like scorpions which “tormented” men for five months. This is the same period the flood waters prevailed (Genesis 8:3), and it may indicate the fifth trumpet period would last 150 years, 1517 to 1667. The torment is probably the same torment referred to in the next trumpet when the two witnesses (Old and New Testaments) briefly “died” and their enemies rejoiced because these two prophets had “tormented them that dwelt on the earth.”

Verse 11 says the locusts had a king, the angel of the bottomless pit. Probably this was Luther, the same as the star (angel) who opened the pit. As Arius was termed “wormwood” in trumpet three, so here Luther is termed “Abaddon ... Apollyon,” destroyer, for so he seemed to the Papal world.

## **Trumpet Six**

The record of this trumpet is the longest of all (Revelation 9:13 to 11:13). This second great “woe” to Christendom was the French Revolution. It was more dynamic, more powerful, more destructive of entrenched Christendom than even the Reformation.

France was a key supporter of Papacy. Not only had it served as a temporary home for Papacy in centuries past, but after the Reformation protestants were decimated by the persecutions of the French monarchy, highlighted by the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre of 1572. Thus the revolution against monarchy and church in this thoroughly Catholic country was a mighty blow. But even more severe, it led to the enthronement of Napoleon Bonaparte, who conquered Europe and broke the thousand-year stranglehold of Papacy.

Daniel 11:40 describes the two-staged blow to Papacy of these times—the Reformation period and the French Revolution period. “The king of the south [shall] push at him [the Ottoman Empire threatened Europe at the time of the Reformation, until stopped at Budapest by the king of Poland]: and the king of the north [France, led by Napoleon] shall come against him like a whirlwind ... he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.”

The sixth trumpet episode erupts from the River Euphrates, representing the peoples who formerly supported Papacy. “The four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men” (Revelation 9:15). The four angels remind us of Revelation 7:1-3, where four angels are commanded to “hold back the four winds” which are loosed in Armageddon. Their loosing here, causing such havoc, is a picture of the French Revolution, which was a small picture of Armageddon. (See *Studies in the Scriptures*, vol. 4, p. 531.)

The symbols which follow are incredibly powerful. An army of 200,000,000 war horses is assembled—orders of magnitude larger than any cavalry which ever existed literally—and the description of these horses is awesome in the extreme. They have breastplates of



fire, jacinth and brimstone, heads like lions breathing out fire, smoke and brimstone, and tails like serpents with biting heads. This is indeed a frightful woe to Christendom, well fitting the ravages of the Napoleonic wars.

There is a clear comparison between the locusts (trumpet five) and horses (trumpet six).

<b>Locusts</b>	<b>Horses</b>
Look like horses	Are horses
Sting like scorpions	Bite like serpents
Prepared for battle	Wage battle
Teeth like lions	Heads like lions
Torment men	Kill men
Iron breastplates	Fire, jacinth, brimstone breastplates

In each case the second category is more intense, more fierce, more devastating, than the first. It is Revelation's way of symbolizing the relative intensity of these two woes: the Reformation and the French Revolution. The first was an intense turmoil caused by the loosing of the doctrines so long oppressed by Papacy. The second is the more intense havoc of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars.

Good manuscripts add a word in Revelation 9:18 missing from the common version. "By these three plagues" (fire, smoke, brimstone). The yet more dynamic and deadly picture of Armageddon which finally removes Christendom is described similarly. "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day [now these three plagues are itemized]: death, and mourning, and famine" (Revelation 18:8). These are a three-fold breakdown of Armageddon. From them there will be no respite, and no recovery. "She shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her."

## **Chapter 10**

This entire chapter is part of the sixth trumpet. A mighty angel descends from heaven clothed with a cloud and a rainbow upon his head. The rainbow was a sign of hope and promise, and here signals the end of the persecution of 1,260 years. Papacy was allowed 3 "times" to "scatter the power of the holy people" (Daniel 12:7), but now the bow appears as a token of brighter prospects for the saints.

The angel held a "little book open" in his hand, in contrast to Daniel 12 where Daniel was told "the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end ... [then] the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:9,10). During the sixth trumpet the Scriptures generally, and Daniel in particular, began to yield their testimony more abundantly.

But it was also a time of judgment. When the angel cried "as when a lion roareth ... seven thunders uttered their voices" (Revelation 10:3). At the second advent there would be another lion-voice of judgment. "He cried as a lion [margin] ... I stand continually upon the watchtower ... Babylon is fallen, is fallen ... that which I have heard of the Lord of

hosts ... have I declared unto you” (Isaiah 21:8-10). After this announcement by the harvest watchman, the seven plagues remove Babylon.

Revelation 10:3 refers to the judgments closing the 1,260 years. The roar of the lion (announcing the end of Papal rule) was followed by seven thunders, the judgments of the Napoleonic ravages, a portent of the seven plagues to come later. After the seven thunders John was “about to write” when a voice said “seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not” (Revelation 10:4), as though to say the full impact of the judgments was in abeyance for a future time. When would they be fully revealed? “In the days of the voice of the seventh angel [when the lion roar of Isaiah 21:8 would sound] ... the mystery of God [perhaps the mystery of the seven thunders] should be finished” (Revelation 10:7).

The time setting is established by verses 5 and 6. The angel standing on the sea and the earth “lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever ... that there should be time no longer.” In Daniel 12:7 one clothed in linen “upon the waters of the river ... held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever, that [Papacy’s rule] shall be for a time, times, and an half.” The same scene which prophesied these times now reappears in Revelation to declare the end of those times—“there should be time [the 3 times of Papal persecution] no longer.” The date would be 1799.

This signaled a great blessing for the saints. The Scriptures would be freely circulated and have a fresh impact on the Christian world. John was told to take the little book and “eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey” (Revelation 10:9). So the blessed word has been sweet in our mouths, though it brings bitter experiences as Godly labors frequently do. “Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.” The amazing testimony of the Scriptures far and wide during the 19th century fulfilled this.

## **Chapter 11**

The opening verses describe a measurement (judgment) of the (nominally) Christian world. The court was excluded. It represents “the holy city,” the saints, who are not part of the false worship of Christendom, and were trodden down for 42 months (1,260 days, fulfilled as years).

During this time God’s two witnesses, the Old and New Testaments, prophesied in sackcloth, an emblem of their oppression during Papacy’s reign. Then the people (the beast) rose out of their dormant condition (the bottomless pit) during the French Revolution, and failing to distinguish the true from the false, opposed all Christianity. In 1793 a decree passed the French Assembly mitigating the influence of the Christian religion and thus the influence of Papacy. Just 1,260 years earlier, in 533, Constantine had decreed the Pope to be the supreme head of all Christian churches (see *Studies in the Scriptures*, vol. 3, p. 70).

But in 533 the Pope had a problem. He was in Italy, ruled by Ostrogoths who were of Arian persuasion. The real power of the decree did not accrue until this tribe was defeated by the fall of their capital Ravenna in 539. So with the decree of 1793, the real brunt came when the pope died a prisoner in France, leaving the Papacy temporarily headless in 1799.

For the following years Christianity (true and false) was “dead” in France, the “street of the great city” Christendom, and the two witnesses had no life. But soon Napoleon concluded a concordat effective April 1802 for France, another 1803 for Italy (McClintock and Strong, “Concordat,” p. 457), re-establishing Christianity as an active force. Thus the two witnesses revived. Soon Bible Societies were formed which distributed Bibles by the millions, causing the Scriptures to ascend to great prominence in the ecclesiastical heavens. Thus “after three days and an half [3 years] the Spirit of life from God entered into them ... And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud” (Revelation 11:11,12).

In all of this there is a parallel between the Two Witnesses (the written Word), and “The Faithful and True Witness” (Jesus, the living Word, Revelation 3:14). They both had a ministry of 1,260 days. They both died at the end, Jesus buried by his friends while the Scriptures languished unburied by their enemies. Both rose from the dead and ascended to heaven in a cloud.

Verse 13 closes the episode of Trumpet Six. “The same hour [as opened the period, Revelation 9:15] was there a great earthquake [the French Revolution], and the tenth part of the city fell [France, one of the ten toes of Christendom], and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand [the faith remnant, numbered at 7,000 at the close of the 1,260 day drought in Elijah’s time—here slain figuratively by the rejection of Christianity]: and the remnant [of nominal Christian France] were affrighted [by all the tumult] and gave glory to the God of heaven [the ruler of the ecclesiastical heavens, the Pope, who was reestablished in the aftermath].

## **The Seventh Trumpet**

This is the third woe. It brings the final end of the old order by the authority of the incoming kingdom of Christ and its judgments which include all of the seven last plagues. The period opens with a pronouncement of a transfer of authority. “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord [Jehovah] and of His Christ [Jesus]; and He will reign forever and ever” (Revelation 11:15, NASB).

As a result of this kingly power, Christ, having returned “with royal title and power” (Studies in the Scriptures, vol. 1, p. 307), removes the old powers. “The nations were angry, and thy wrath is come [exhibited in two World Wars, with Armageddon impending], and the time of the dead that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints” (Revelation 11:18). This is not the time of the general resurrection, nor even of the Ancient Worthies. The “prophets

and saints” are two designations of the Church class, God’s spokesmen (prophets) and holy ones (saints), as in Revelation 18:24 and 16:6.

“And shouldest destroy them which destroy [corrupt] the [Christian] earth” (Revelation 11:18). This is not second death for individuals, nor is it referring to environmental polluters. It refers to the destruction of Christendom, including “the great whore, which did corrupt [same root word as “destroy” above] the earth with her fornication” (Revelation 19:2).

All of this occurs in the Gospel age harvest when Christ is present as earth’s new king, but before his righteous administration is established in the earth. The seventh trumpet is a woe, like the two preceding. It is a period of judgment, and does not encompass the raising or blessing of mankind in the kingdom.

“And the temple of God was opened in heaven [where everything after chapter four occurs], and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament [the saints in their eternal abode]: and there were lightnings, and voices and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail [all symbols repeated in the seven plagues of chapter 16]” (Revelation 11:19).

Thus closes the seven judgments of the scroll. Thus ends the harvest of this age. Thus is prepared the glorious kingdom of righteousness which follows, which “shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44).

## Revelation 12

# A Gospel Age Overview

*The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John. — Revelation 1:1 (NIV)*

A verse by verse study of Revelation 12

The revelation of those things which “must soon take place” describe events that would occur during a 2,000-year period we call the Gospel age. The first half of the book of Revelation contains the messages to the seven churches, the opening of the seven seals, and the sounding of the seven trumpets. These all describe the events of the Gospel age from different perspectives. The last half of Revelation is concerned with the events that end the Gospel age. Because the entire book is written in symbolic language, it definitely does not literally mean what it says. There is no better example of that than chapter 12 which also describes the entire Gospel age.

Understanding this chapter requires a basic understanding of the symbols sun, moon, stars, heaven, dragon, “Michael,” and water. To consider any of these as meaning exactly what they literally describe will not reveal the beauty of revelation which God gave to Jesus Christ and who in turn described it in vision to John (Revelation 1:10).

This chapter describes a woman who, in the pains of child birth, is confronted by a dragon who wants to destroy her child. The child is a son and is whisked away to safety. A battle between the dragon and this son occurs and the dragon is defeated. A voice from “heaven” declares that salvation has come, but the woman who is on earth must go into the wilderness to escape from the dragon. As a last resort the dragon attempts to destroy the woman with a flood of water, but she is not harmed.

The Woman—Revelation 12:1,2

*“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.”*

This woman is “clothed with the sun.” When John received the revelation, he described the countenance of “one like unto the Son of man . . . as the sun shineth in his strength” (Revelation 1:13,16). Thus the woman has the enlightenment of Jesus Christ (she is “clothed” with it). She stands on the moon which has no light of its own; it only reflects light it receives from the sun. We are told that the priests in the tabernacle arrangement “serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things” (Hebrews 8:5). The Jerusalem Bible renders Hebrews 10:1, “Since the Law has no more than a reflection of these realities and no finished picture of them, it is quite incapable of bringing the worshipers

to perfection.” So the woman is grounded in the Jewish Law arrangement but is not herself under it. A “star” refers to a bright luminary in the religious or ecclesiastical world. Jude, for example, refers to ungodly men as “wandering stars” (Jude 13). The woman has “a crown of twelve stars,” clearly a reference to the 12 apostles of the Lamb (Revelation 21:14).

Who is this woman? She is the true church at the beginning of the Gospel age. She is the one who Isaiah says “shall renew their strength, [who] shall mount up with wings as eagles” (Isaiah 40:31). Eagles’ wings will be used by this woman in verse 14. The early church is in the process of producing something which is conveyed by saying she is “with child.”\*

### The Dragon—Revelation 12:3,4

*“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.”*

This is the first occurrence of the word “dragon” in the New Testament. It comes from a Greek word that is used only in the book of Revelation. This dragon is not in the heaven that is God’s literal dwelling place. It is in the “heaven” that Peter says is “reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:7). This “heaven” describes the place of religious control over mankind. At the time of the early church, what could be said about the state of the religious world? The fourth universal empire, ruled by a succession of Roman emperors, controlled the world, and it was pagan. It intended to put down anyone that might arise to challenge its power. The powerful from time immemorial have always done whatever it takes to retain their power against any threat, real or imagined. Herod, whose power was but a shadow of Caesar’s, slew all those two years and younger in Bethlehem thinking that would erase a possible threat to his personal power (Matthew 2:16).

The dragon as a symbol represents civil power both in this chapter and all other places the symbol appears in Revelation (13:2,4,11; 16:13; 20:2). This dragon is not the personal devil although the devil does use civil power for his purposes. When Peter urged our Lord not to go to Jerusalem to be crucified, Jesus said, “Get thee behind me Satan” (Matthew 16:23). He recognized that at that moment Satan was using Peter in an attempt to control him. At the time of the early church, civil power was in absolute control of both religious and secular life. The “dragon” was in “heaven.”

### The Battle—Revelation 12:5-9

*“And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a*

*thousand two hundred and threescore days. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."*

When the child comes forth, it is caught up "unto God and to his throne." But this is not literally heaven because the woman is not there with her son. She must flee into a wilderness condition for 1,260 "days." These "days," of course, are not literal. In the symbolism of Scripture each symbolic "day" represents one literal year (see Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6). While the son prepares to "rule all nations with a rod of iron," the "woman" must spend 1,260 literal years in the wilderness. This is similar to the experience of Elijah who had to hide himself from Jezebel for three and a half years, some of which time was in the wilderness where he was fed by ravens (1 Kings 17:4).

Michael is the name of the archangel (Jude 9); it is a name used by Daniel as a title of a spirit being (Daniel 10:13,21; 12:1). But that does not mean that the archangel is here fighting against the dragon because the name is similarly being used as a symbol. The "heaven" in which this battle is being waged is the ecclesiastical heaven. The Hebrew word Michael means "Who (is) like God" (Strong's #4317). The force opposing pagan Rome would win the battle; civil power would no longer dictate religious thought. That would become the right of the one who has set himself up as God, the pope. Papal Rome replaced pagan Rome.

According to John the false Christian church came out from the true church: "Little children, it is the last hour, and, according as you hear that the antichrist is coming, now also there have come to be many antichrists, whence we know that it is the last hour. Out of us they come, but they were not of us, for if they were of us, they would have remained with us. But it was that they may be manifested that they are not all of us. And you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all are aware" (1John 2:18-20, Concordant translation; emphasis added).

In Matthew 13:24-30 Jesus gave the parable of the wheat and the tares. The field of activity, which was expected to bring forth only wheat, in fact brought forth both weeds and wheat, both a bad and a good "crop." This has been an accurate description of the events of the Gospel age. There has been a true church during this period, but there has also been a false church as well.

After losing this battle, civil power was confined to secular matters, those things that happened on the "earth" as opposed to "heaven." Satan was directing civil power, of course, just as he "pulled the strings" of the rulers of ecclesiastical power, the pope and the church system of which he was the head.

Paul calls this false system the "man of sin" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Commenting upon the man of sin, Pastor Charles Russell has written: "These various appellations and brief descriptions [of the man of sin] indicate a base, subtle, hypocritical, deceptive, tyrannical

and cruel character, developed in the midst of the Christian Church; at first creeping in and up very gradually, then rapidly ascending in power and influence until it reaches the very pinnacle of earthly power, wealth, and glory—meanwhile exerting its influence against the truth, and against the saints, and for its own aggrandizement, claiming, to the last, peculiar sanctity and authority and power from God.” (Studies in the Scriptures, vol. 2, p. 272.)

### The Proclamation—Revelation 12:10-12

*“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”*

The “heaven” is the same here as it has been up to this point. The “loud voice” emanates from the ecclesiastic heaven and it is the voice of papacy claiming that because of their past faithfulness, they have the right to rule as Christ’s vicegerent. It is the counterfeit kingdom that was to reign for a period of 1,260 literal years during the time when the woman, the true church, had to remain in a wilderness condition.

The rejoicing in the “heavens” is a condition only for those associated with the apostate church. For those who are not a part of this system, it is a message of woe. As we know from history the false church system actually used civil power (the dragon) to enforce its power and control over the people.

### The Woman’s Persecution—Revelation 12:13-17

*“And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*

Many commentators on the book of Revelation measure the period of the reign of the false church from 539 to 1799. The Pope had been left in control of Rome in 538, and in 539 the threatening Goths were defeated at their stronghold Ravenna. The Pope was taken from Rome by the French in 1798, and he died as a prisoner in France in 1799, leaving Papacy temporarily headless. This was the beginning of the end for the false church system. The French Revolution which broke out in 1789 broke a spell of darkness



and initiated a great flood of truth on many subjects. Water is a symbol of truth. “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

The French Revolution marks the start of a flood of truth throughout the earth, especially the truth consisting of the Scriptures themselves. The first of several Bible societies was formed in England in 1803 and had the objective of placing God’s word in the hands of the common people. Today the Bible has been translated into all the written languages of the earth. The “dragon” (civil power) thought to injure the true church by a great increase of knowledge on many subjects such as science, sociology, medicine, and education. But the “earth”—meaning of course the people living in the earth —embraced all of these truths and it proved to be a blessing, not a curse.

The final verse describes a war between civil power and the “remnant of [the woman’s] seed.” Since the interpretation of prophecy is best understood after it is fulfilled, we cannot be sure just how civil power will afflict the true church at the end of the Gospel age.

So we see from this brief chapter found in the middle of the book of Revelation that what began as a time of great distress for the true church did not result in permanent harm. God’s protecting power has remained over her through this long and difficult period when ecclesiastical and secular power would have liked to wipe her away. From our vantage point in history, we can see that the best course was to never grow weary in well doing because God’s time table was not man’s. May we similarly maintain our confidence steadfast unto the end even though the time for the full establishment of the kingdom seems to tarry. We know it will not really tarry (Habakkuk 2:3).

## Revelation 16

# The Seven Last Plagues

*And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.—Revelation 15:1*

Carl Hagensick

The most fearful symbology in Revelation is that of the “seven last plagues” which mark the consummation of the age. As ancient Egypt was decimated by ten plagues which fulfilled Moses’ repetitive request to “Let my people go,” these seven last plagues destroy symbolic Babylon and permit all mankind to go forth from the prison house of sin and death into the glories of Christ’s kingdom.

The term “seven last plagues” suggests that they are part of a larger group and thus suggests a natural connection with the ten plagues of Egypt. This connection is further strengthened by the fact that the plagues of Egypt were separated into two portions: the first three came upon all the people including the Israelites while the seven last came upon the Egyptians only. The first three were also duplicated by Pharaoh’s magicians while the last seven were not. Table 1 contains a description of the Egyptian plagues.

Table 1: The Ten Plagues of Exodus 7:8 to 11:10				
Plague	Symbol of Divine Power	Warning	Who Affected	Egyptian Magicians
1. Water to Blood	Aaron’s Rod	Full	All	Imitated
2. Frogs	Aaron’s Rod	Less	All	Imitated
3. Lice, Fleas, etc.	Aaron’s Rod	None	All	Declared God’s Finger
4. Flies or Beetles		Full	Egyptians	
5. Death of Livestock		Less	Egyptians	
6. Boils		None	Egyptians	
7. Hail	Moses’ Rod	Full	Egyptians	
8. Locusts	Moses’ Rod	Less	Egyptians	
9. Darkness	Moses’ Rod	None	Egyptians	
10. Death of Firstborn			Special Provision for Hebrews	

Condensed from a Chart by Tim Cimbura (See Reprints, p. 3993)

Below is a comparison of those plagues with the woes and plagues in Revelation:

Table 2: Comparing Plagues with Trumpets

Plague Affects	Result	Trumpet Affects	Result
Earth	Boils	Earth	Hail fire, blood, trees burned up
Sea	Turned as the blood of a dead man	Sea	Mountain cast into sea, sea becomes blood
Rivers and Fountains of Water	Turned into blood	Rivers and Fountains of water	Star falls into sea, waters are bitter
Sun	Given power to scorch men	Sun	Third of sun, moon, and stars darkened
Seat of the beast	Becomes darkness	Bottomless pit	Smoke, Locusts issue forth
Euphrates	Dries Up	Euphrates	Horses come forth
Air	Thunder, hail, lightning	Air	Kingdom of earth transferred to Christ

## Trumpets and Plagues

Revelation is built upon a series of sevens: seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven thunders, seven plagues. The churches, seals, and trumpets are different viewpoints of the same seven time periods while the seven plagues apparently all occur during the last of these time periods, the Laodicean period.

There does appear, however, to be a unique relationship between the seven trumpets and the seven plagues. Each of these successively affects the same area of society (described in symbolic terms) as shown in Table 2. That each plague is thus related to the trumpet of the same number suggests the fact that the plagues are retributive in nature—each plague being specific against a given sin of Babylon through the Christian age. In an article entitled “The Ten Plagues of Egypt” Pastor Charles Russell makes this suggestion:

“And as Pharaoh and his people received a severe retributive punishment for every evil they had inflicted upon the Israelites, and as their first-born became retributive representatives of the Israelitish babes they had caused to be drowned in the Nile, so their flocks and herds, and the crops that were destroyed by the locusts and insects, etc., and all the troubles upon them were retributive punishments, for the unjust exactions made of the Israelites. So we may suppose that the great troubles and losses which will come upon “the powers that be” of the present time, in the approaching trouble, will, in some sense or degree, be a retributive requirement, an offset for a not sufficiently benevolent and just treatment of many under their control in the present time, when the blessings and inventions of our day should be accruing more generally to the benefit of the masses.”—Reprints, p. 2910.

This is confirmed by the sentence pronounced in Revelation 19:2, “For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.”

## Two Old Testament Parallels

Detailed judgments of the Lord against Babylon are found both in Isaiah (chapter 13) and in Jeremiah (chapters 50 and 51). In the latter condemnation, a series of seven successive judgments are predicted which parallel those in Revelation.

“A sword is upon the Chaldeans, saith the LORD, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wise men. A sword is upon the liars; and they shall dote: a sword is upon her mighty men; and they shall be dismayed. A sword is upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women: a sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed. A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols. Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbor cities thereof, saith the LORD; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein.”—Jeremiah 50:35-40 (see Table 3).

The value of this text is not so much to identify what the plagues are, but upon whom they are poured. However the last two—the plague of drought and the utter desolation of the final condemnation—do support the contents of the sixth and seventh vials.

Table 3: Comparing Plagues with Swords	
Revelation’s Seven Last Plagues	Jeremiah’s Seven Swords
1. Earth produces boils	1. Sword on princes and wise men
2. Sea like blood of dead man	2. Sword on liars who become foolish
3. Rivers and fountains become blood	3. Sword confounds mighty men
4. Sun scorches men	4. Sword on horses and chariots; fear
5. Seat of the beast darkens	5. Sword robs treasuries
6. Euphrates dried up	6. Drought upon waters
7. Air filled with lightning, storm, and hail	7. Destruction like Sodom and Gomorrah

1 Corinthians 15:52 speaks of the resurrection of the saints as being “at the last trump.” The term “last trump” implies the last of a series. Since the first letter to the church in Corinth was written long before Revelation described the “seven trumpets,” which series of trumpets did Paul have in mind? The only precedent for a series of trumpets in Paul’s day was the sounding of the seven trumpets in the battle of Jericho (Joshua 6). In that battle the Israelites marched around the city for six successive days, concluding with a daily trumpet blast; on the seventh day they marched about the city seven times and concluded with a shout and seven trumpet blasts. It was then that the walls of Jericho fell. This implies that the “seventh trump” was itself composed of seven trumpets, implying that the seventh trumpet of Revelation may well be the “seven last plagues.”

There is general concord among students of the Bible that these plagues refer to the concluding troubles which remove the old social and religious orders. In Revelation 18:4 we read, "I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." The strong implication is that all who hear and reject the call to "Come out of her" are in danger of receiving her plagues. If this call was issued in the latter part of the nineteenth century, as most Bible Students believe, then the plagues would have had to begin within the average life span of a person living at that time.

Note also that in the illustration of the fall of Jericho, there was no introductory trumpet to the final seven which brought down the wall, but that the main cause of Jericho's fall was the seven trumpets on the seventh day. Thus the seventh trumpet of Revelation and therefore the third woe (Revelation 11:14) comprise "the seven last plagues."

The plagues are destructive forces that bring down symbolic Babylon. In Revelation 18:8 we read: "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." This is definitive of the results of the seven last plagues.

In agreement with this thought are the words of Pastor Russell: "This catastrophe — sectarian destruction, the fall of Babylon—is what is referred to in the Book of Revelation under the symbol of the seven last plagues (Revelation 15-18). The pain from these will consist largely of mental chagrin, the disappointment of sectarian hopes and plans, and the wounding of sectarian pride. When the Master said, 'Watch ye, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things coming upon the world,' it included the pain of these plagues, as well as other annoyances to which the world will be subject because of ignorance of the real plan of God. It is of escape from these plagues that the Revelator (our Lord—Revelation 1:1) speaks to us, saying, 'Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues'—Revelation 18:4." —Reprints, p. 1573.

### The Three Woes and First Three Plagues

Just as there were three plagues that preceded the final seven in Egypt prior to the exodus, so the plagues of Revelation are preceded by three "woes" (Revelation 8:13) which precede the more destructive judgments of the plagues. The first of these "woes," identified during the sounding of the fifth trumpet (Revelation 9:12), are the twin dogmas of Rationalism and Humanism which followed the great Reformation. These had the effect of undermining the legitimacy of the Papal hierarchy. The second woe (Revelation 11:14), during the sixth trumpet, occurred during the political revolutions in Europe which removed the foundation for the concept of the divine right of kings. The third woe deals with the Lord's return and its mission to remove the present social order prior to establishing the kingdom. This is the work of the seven last plagues.

"And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which

worshipped his image” (Revelation 16:2). The first plague is poured upon the dry ground, organized society, the “princes and wise men” of the Jeremiah text. The sores, more literally “ulcers,” which it produced proceed from an inner infection and correspond to the challenging of religious authority by the late nineteenth century modernists on the one hand and serious Bible scholars on the other. The works of both attacked the superstitious dogmas by which both Papal and Protestant church hierarchies held the laity in subjection.

“And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea” (Revelation 16:3). The scene now moves to the sea, a picture of unstable and restless society. Jeremiah identifies this class as the “liars” in Babylon. The sea does not just turn into blood, but into “the blood of a dead man.” After death, human blood putrefies, separating the clot from the serum. At the end of the nineteenth century, the dogmas of both the modernists (that the Bible was not inspired) and the fundamentalists (still holding fast to such ancient creedal mythologies as eternal torment and the Trinity) so polarized the people that both groups lost credibility—they were separated into two opposing camps “like the blood of a dead man.”

“And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood” (Revelation 16:4). Water and blood are still the symbols of the third plague, but here it is not on the sea, but on the sources of water: rivers and fountains of waters. The blood is not the blood of a dead man but flowing, vital blood. The fountainheads of gospel teachings for centuries have been the college and seminary systems which produced those who would minister the gospel. By the early twentieth century modernistic thought had entered these fountainheads of learning, leading many to believe that the Old Testament, with its wars and its sacrifices, was only an account of dead men’s blood. Professor Delitzsch renders the cognate passage from Jeremiah 50:36, “A sword is against her heroes and they shall be confounded.”

These first three plagues, like those in Exodus, form a group and the Revelator summarizes the net effect of the three by affirming that these three judgments were deserved and righteously administered (Revelation 16:5-7).

## The Fourth and Fifth Plagues

“And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory” (Revelation 16:8,9). The effect of the fourth plague, poured on the sun, is not so much to enlighten as to scorch men with its heat. Once again a reference to the corresponding “sword” in Jeremiah is helpful: “A sword is upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women” (Jeremiah 50:37). While this plague is directed at the sun, its ultimate effect is on the “horses and chariots,” or doctrines and the organizations which they drive.

A direct outgrowth of World War I was the establishment of investigative reporting as a standard journalistic practice. Although this mode of journalism had been started by the Pulitzer papers 50 years earlier, it attained legitimacy and was no longer regarded as “muckraking” when the major media of the day began exposing the forces behind the war. Even as these reporters began disclosing the hidden machinations behind the war efforts, some sincere theologians began re-examining old creedal concepts and challenging them. Prominent along this line was the movement away from inherent immortality to the biblical doctrine of conditional immortality. The effect of this two-pronged plague was to further remove creedal fences and leave the mingled and confused religious peoples “as women,” defenseless.

“And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds” (Revelation 16:10, 11). Most Protestant expositors agree that the “seat of the beast” refers to Rome and its authoritative Roman Catholic Church. The basis for this dominance has been the concept of the supreme apostolic authority of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. In matters of dogma, when speaking *ex cathedra*, he was considered infallible. This foundation doctrine of the Papal church has been severely challenged in the past century, particularly since the last Vatican council. No longer do official Papal pronouncements go unchallenged. This is particularly illustrated in such concepts as the sanctity of human life. The laity, for example, regularly ignores repeated statements against the sins of birth control and abortion.

Note that the corresponding “sword” in Jeremiah is against her “treasures.” While the Hebrew *owtsar* is usually translated “treasures,” it is also translated “storehouses” and “wine cellars” in 1 Chronicles 27:26-28. The “treasures” of Papacy, while including immense financial wealth, have also been its control over its doctrines, often indicated by the biblical symbol of wine. It is these doctrines based on the outdated creeds of yore, that are particularly decimated by the fifth plague.

## The Sixth and Seventh Plagues

In Revelation 16:12-21 we have much greater detail about the last two plagues than we were given for the first five. We are standing today at the close of the fifth plague. The sixth and seventh plagues are fast approaching. In the sixth plague we see:

1. The River Euphrates which ran through Babylon and was its main source of commerce, dried up, preparing the way for the “kings of the east.”
2. The “beast,” the “dragon,” and the “false prophet” (a term which applies to the image of the beast after it gains life), unitedly issue “unclean spirits,” or harmful messages with the effect of gathering the nations to war.

3. The nations are successfully gathered into the yet future “Battle of Armageddon.”

This “drying up” of the Euphrates is described in Jeremiah 50:38 as a “drought upon her waters.” This refers to the drying up of the traditional sources of revenue for antitypical Babylon. This has the effect of severely straining her resources which weakens her as the “beast” so that she must seek an alliance with “the dragon” (civil power) and the “false prophet” (an energetic Protestant union of churches).

Then comes the final battle of the ages, or “Battle of Armageddon,” pictured by the seventh and last plague. Like the last plague in Exodus, it will have the effect of letting God’s people, the entire redeemed human race, go free from the bondage of sin and death. It is this final plague which brings the utter destruction, such as rained on Sodom and Gomorrah, to Babylon the Great (Jeremiah 50:39,40; compare Isaiah 34).

These details are given in Revelation 16 about the final plague:

1. Poured upon the air, the vial has the effect of producing a ferocious storm of lightning (enlightenments) and thunder (the controversies which come from such enlightening).

2. A great earthquake (revolution), much greater than the earthquake (French Revolution) found during the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12; 8:5; 11:13).

3. The dissolution of the tripartite union of the beast, dragon, and false prophet formed during the sixth plague, entailing the final collapse of great Babylon.

4. The fleeing away of every island (former mountains or kingdoms, now surrounded by the sea of humanity (compare Psalm 46:2).

5. A plague of hail (hardened water, or truth) which causes men to blaspheme the name of God as they face the harsh realities of all rights restrained by the benevolent kingdom of Christ.

When these judgments are complete, then shall be fulfilled the promise of Revelation 18:21, “And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.”

The judgments of these “seven last plagues” will be great indeed, but they are only the necessary precursor for a glorious kingdom in which all men shall learn the ways of the Lord so that a restored human race may live together in eternal harmony.



## Poems and Short Features

# Revelation: A Coded Message, A Special Blessing

In reading through the Book of Revelation  
How seemingly very little it reveals—  
With angels, churches, stars that fall from heaven,  
And candlesticks, trumpets, beasts, and woes and seals.

Plus horses, scorpions, locusts, plagues and lightnings,  
A dragon, a Lamb, a throne, beheaded souls:  
Its symbols paint some mystifying pictures  
As vision by vision swiftly it unfolds.

Its author, God, designed to give His servants,  
Who earnestly seek His will to know and do,  
An understanding rich and full of meaning.  
The message is coded; meant for just the few.

Its contents guide their steps and give them courage  
To faithfully follow Jesus, come what may.  
Their hearts are firmly set on things of heaven;  
No worldly allurements draw them from the way.

The book sets forth, in visions strong and vivid,  
The course of the church throughout the Gospel Age.  
As each successive era comes in focus,  
Related events of history cross its stage.

The early church, with doctrines pure and holy,  
Were zealous to spread God's truth both far and near.  
The world's reproach and hatred could not stop them;  
The Master's return and kingdom were so dear.

As time went on and errors gained a foothold,  
The nominal church increased in wealth and might.  
Though few, there still remained some worthy Christians  
Who patiently walked in ways of truth and light.

Their pattern, Jesus, trod the path before them.  
His faithfulness led to death on Calvary's cross.  
His saints sought God's acclaim, not worldly honor,  
Rejoicing to serve in toil and pain and loss.

The precious truths grew dim and almost perished;  
A counterfeit system reigned with brutal power.  
In every era God brought forth a spokesman  
To fearlessly give the message for the hour.

The Reformation came, and then the Harvest:  
This seventh and final stage is well along.  
The end is near; true saints are ever watchful.  
The struggle goes on; temptations still are strong.

The book holds forth a blessing now and future  
To those who take heed and keep its precepts true.  
They'll gain the grand reward and reign with Jesus,  
Mankind to uplift when all things are made new.

—Elaine Redeker

## The Christian's Commission

Art thou down-hearted child of God?  
If thou would'st courage seek,  
Forget thyself—go forth and tell  
Glad tidings to the meek.

Is thy heart sad because of loss?  
Go forth and take this token,  
Tell all that mourn, that soon our God  
Will death's great prison open.

For ashes, beauty—oil of joy,  
And praise as garments strong,  
Instead of hearts of heaviness,  
Their souls shall fill with song.

While God today his vengeance shows,  
On nations great and small,  
Teach them to pray "Thy Kingdom come"—  
God's blessings on them all.

This then is thy commission now,  
Go forth and do thy part,  
And thou wilt find the greatest joy  
Lies deep within thy heart.

—Alice M. Ripper, *Poems of the Way*

# Christ's Glorious Kingdom

A glorious time is coming, the morning promised long,  
When truth and right with holy might, shall overthrow the wrong  
When Christ the Lord and rightful king, empowered from on high  
Will stretch his hand throughout the land, with justice by and by.

The boast of haughty tyrants no more shall fill the air,  
But age and youth will love the truth, and speed it everywhere,  
No more from want and sorrow shall come the hopeless cry,  
But war shall cease and perfect peace will flourish by and by.

A glorious time is coming, the time of Jubilee,  
With shout and song `twill sweep along like billows of the sea,  
The joyfulness of nations shall ring through earth and sky,  
This day of grace draws on apace—O happy by and by!

The glories of Christ's kingdom we gladly watch and pray,  
Till o'er the height the morning light shall drive the gloom away,  
For when the balm of healing shall reach mankind from high,  
They'll turn toward their precious Lord and love Him by and by.

—Gertrude Siebert, *Comforted by God*, p. 27