

The Time of the End – Part Eleven

A Series on the Book of Revelation

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Adapted from Arlen Chitwood's book by Jeanne Alley

“Seals, Trumpets, Vials”

Revelation 6:1,2

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts [‘living creatures’] saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

1). The seven-sealed scroll which Christ took from His Father's right hand in Revelation chapter five, which He began to open in chapter six, contained God's redemptive terms for the forfeited inheritance, the domain which Christ and His co-heirs were about to rule (cf. Ps. 2:6-9; Rev. 2:26-28).

a) And this scroll contained the entirety of these redemptive terms, for this scroll was the only thing which the Father held in His hand. God required nothing in addition to that contained in this scroll. But, conversely, God required everything which the breaking of the seals would reveal.

b) These redemptive terms, i.e. *different judgments*, are seen being brought to pass in a triad of sevens:

- i) The opening of the seven-sealed scroll (6:1-17; 8:1).
- ii) The sounding of seven trumpets (8:2-10:11; 11:15ff).
- iii) The pouring out of seven vials (15:1-16:21).

2). Revelation chapter six shows us what will occur when the first six seals have been broken. Then, following an aside in chapter seven (which provides information about 144,000 Jews being sealed, along with information concerning saved individuals who had been slain during the Tribulation) – *the seventh seal is broken* (8:1). And judgments being brought to pass when this final seal is broken will complete all which God requires for the redemption of the inheritance, the earth.

a) The breaking of this seventh and final seal produces “silence in heaven about the space of half an hour” (Rev. 8:1). The reason for this silence is not given in the text, though seemingly evident. Since this is the final seal on the scroll, judgments under this

seal will bring everything to a conclusion (because of what we know that the scroll represents). And these judgments are of a severity unparalleled in man's 6,000-year history (cf. Jer. 30:6, 7; Matt. 24:21, 22).

b) Then following the silence after the seventh seal has been broken, John sees seven angels standing before God. Each angel is given a trumpet, and these seven angels then sound the trumpets in a successive manner, with judgments occurring in connection with each (8:2-10:11; 11:15-19).

c) The sounding of the seven trumpets forms the judgments revealed when the seventh seal on the scroll is broken. These are the judgments under the seventh seal, and the sounding of these seven trumpets brings to pass all of the judgments seen when this final seal is broken.

d) As will become more clear as we compare other scriptures from Revelation, the judgments that are then revealed when the *seventh trumpet sounds* are referred to as "the seven last plagues" or "the vials of the wrath of God" (15:1; 16:1).

e) These vials are then given to seven angels, and these angels pour out their vials in successive order (16:2-17). The pouring out of these vials forms the judgments introduced when the seventh trumpet has sounded, and they complete all which God requires for the redemption of the inheritance.

3). Through the manner in which all of this is structured in the Book of Revelation (the use of 7's), completeness is shown by the breaking of the seven seals on the scroll, completeness is again shown by the sounding of the seven trumpets, and completeness is again shown by the pouring out of the seven vials.

a) One could argue that completeness *would have to be shown by the breaking of the seals on the scroll*, for this scroll is all that the Father held in His right hand in chapter five. Then, completeness would again have to be shown by the sounding of the trumpets, for these trumpets comprise all of the judgments under the seventh seal. And completeness would again have to be shown by the pouring out of the vials, for these vials comprise all of the judgments revealed when the seventh trumpet has sounded.

b) Relative to completeness seen in the seven trumpets and again in the seven vials, note what is stated in chapters ten and eleven in connection with the sounding of the seventh trumpet -

Revelation 10:7

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets."

Revelation 11:15

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms [lit., ‘The kingdom of this world is become that’] of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever.”

c) And also note what is stated in chapter sixteen in connection with the pouring out of the seventh vial:

Revelation 16:17

“And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.”

4). Through the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the revelation of God, which began in a progressive manner in Gen. 1:1, is seen to be fully opened up and made known. And this will have been accomplished through the revelation, the unveiling, of God’s Son, the subject matter of the Book of Revelation (Rev. 1:1). The inseparable nature of the Father and the Son (John 1:1, 2, 14) necessitates that a complete revelation of One would, as well, be a complete revelation of the Other.

a) Then, through the sounding of this seventh trumpet, matters as they relate to the redemption of the inheritance are also seen to be complete, with the kingdom of this world (one world kingdom which had heretofore been under Satan’s rule) becoming that “of our Lord, and of his Christ” (11:15).

b) However, the sceptre being removed from Satan’s hand and placed in Christ’s hand is something which can’t occur until the seven vials of wrath have been poured out. But when the seventh trumpet sounds, Scripture views the matter in the sense that these seven vials have already been poured out, for, as we will see in subsequent chapters in this book (Chapters 16-18). Essentially, these seven vial judgments simply form a further description of the seven trumpet judgments, providing additional detail and commentary.

c) This is why attention can be called to the Father being fully revealed in the person of His Son and why the transfer of power in the kingdom can be viewed as occurring at the time an angel sounds the seventh trumpet (10:7; 11:15).

d) This same thing is also seen immediately after the seventh vial has been poured out, shown by the words “It is done” (16:17).

e) The words “It is done” in 16:17 are revealed to come directly from God’s throne. These words – one word in the Greek text, in the perfect tense – form a climactic

statement, proclaimed in a loud voice. And, through the perfect tense which was used, this statement refers to a work (a redemptive work) completed in past time, with the results of this work existing during present time in a finished state. A more literal rendering would be, "It has been completed," or "It has come to pass."

f) This is similar to the way we understand the use of the perfect tense relative to Christ's redemptive work when He cried out from the Cross, "It is finished" [also one word in the Greek text, proclaimed in a loud voice (cf. Matt. 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46; John 19:30)]. A more literal rendering would be "It has been finished ['completed']." Everything relating to Christ's work at Calvary had been finished at this point in time, and this work would exist forever in this finished state. Nothing could be added or taken from that which Christ had done. Thus, He could now willingly relinquish His life, committing His spirit to the Father, which is what occurred.

g) Exactly this same type completed work is seen in connection with God's work surrounding the redemption of the inheritance after the seventh vial has been poured out. This act completes all work in connection with the redemption of the inheritance, all of this work will have occurred in past time, and this work will then exist in a finished state. And this work will exist forever in this finished state.

5) A Chronology of Events

a) The opening of the seven seals, the sounding of the seven trumpets, and the pouring out of the seven vials occur in the Book of Revelation in a chronological sequence. However, two things need to be kept in mind:

i/ These judgments – which seemingly form separate judgments, following closely on the heels of one another – are not all separate judgments, as might first appear. In fact, most are not. Most provide further information on one or more preceding judgments. This is the place many go wrong when studying the Book of Revelation, resulting in confusion.

That is to say, some revealed events stand alone, forming separate judgments. But others hold the same relationship to one another as seen in the relationship between the seven trumpets and the seven vials (with later revealed judgments being further descriptions of former revealed judgments, providing additional information). (All of this will become evident in subsequent chapters in this book, particularly in Chapters 15-18.)

ii) Then, judgments beginning with the breaking of one seal (e.g., the second seal) do not necessarily have to be completed before judgments in connection with a

subsequent seal can begin (e.g., the third seal). Many of these judgments will undoubtedly overlap succeeding judgments (e.g., judgments seen when the second seal is broken may continue throughout judgments revealed when the remaining five seals are broken [and if so, they would, of necessity, continue through judgments revealed by the sounding of the seven trumpets and the corresponding pouring out of the seven vials]).

b) Many of these judgments, because of their very nature, would have to overlap one another (e.g., note the judgments coming to pass when the second, third, and fourth seals are broken [6:3-8]). And this, of course, would shed light on Christ's words to His disciples about conditions on earth during that future time:

Matthew 24:21-22

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake [Israel's sake] those days shall be shortened."

c) So, although the breaking of the seven seals of the scroll (chs. 6, 8), the sounding of the seven trumpets (chs. 8-10, 11b), and the pouring out of the seven vials (chs. 15, 16), are seen occurring in a successive order, judgments revealed through this sequence do not necessarily refer to a succession of judgments. As previously seen, at times (actually, more often than not), subsequently revealed judgments form further descriptions of previously revealed judgments.

d) And the same thing is seen through revealed events in chapters seven, eleven through fourteen, and seventeen through nineteen. These chapters depict different events occurring during the same time that the seals on the scroll are being broken (chs. 6, 8), as well as depicting events which overlap one another or events occurring at the same time. A chronological sequence of events can be seen within a chapter or part of a chapter, but this same chronological sequence of events cannot necessarily be seen as one moves from chapter to chapter.

i/For example, the first part of chapter seven provides information about the sealing of 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each tribe (with the tribe of Manasseh, descendants of Joseph's firstborn, replacing the tribe of Dan). It is clear from related Scripture that this will occur near the middle of the Tribulation, and it is evident that most of the events seen in the previous chapter (depicted by the breaking of the first six seals) occur during the last half of the Tribulation (the breaking of the second seal allows events which begin to occur in the middle of the Tribulation to be shown; and the breaking of the remaining five seals allows events which occur during the last half of the Tribulation to be shown).

ii/Or note the ministry of the two witnesses in chapter eleven. They, of necessity, will prophesy during the first part of the Tribulation. Thus, they will appear on the scene about the same time that the first seal on the scroll is broken in chapter six. And chapter eleven goes on to relate events which will occur during the last half of the Tribulation as well, covering the complete seven years. Events in this chapter carry one forward to the same point in time seen in the previous chapter – to the time when an angel sounds the seventh trumpet (cf. 10:7; 11:15).

iii/Then note events in chapter twelve. These events occur during time covering at least most of the Tribulation, particularly the last half. Events in chapter thirteen begin about the middle of the Tribulation and occur during the last half, and events in chapter fourteen appear to cover about the same time.

iv/Or note chapters seventeen and eighteen. These chapters sequentially or chronologically follow the pouring out of the seventh vial (16:17). But events in these chapters, of necessity, will have to occur before this seventh vial is poured out (some long before), during the same time that some of the events in previous chapters are seen occurring.

e) All of these chapters (chs. 7, 11a, 12-14, 17-19a) cover different related subjects, with numerous events in these chapters occurring at the same time. These events may or may not begin at the same time, but they all move toward or end at the same time – with events surrounding Christ's return at the end of Man's Day, with the Lord's Day to follow.

f) Actually, Scripture as a whole, along with numerous parts of Scripture, is structured in this manner. Scripture will often go over a complete sequence, then drop back and go over either part or all of this sequence again, in a different manner, adding detail. However, the end or goal is always the same. It is the same as seen in the way Genesis begins, or as seen in the way John began his gospel – moving beyond six days into the

seventh day, moving beyond Man's Day into the Lord's Day – which is exactly the way matters are seen moving in the Book of Revelation.

6). As It Was, So Shall It Be

a) Slightly over thirteen of the twenty-two chapters in the Book of Revelation (chs. 6-19) have to do with events which will occur during the coming seven-year Tribulation, or at the time of Christ's return immediately following. And chapter five could be added, for this entire chapter has to do with the seven-sealed scroll, which began to be opened in chapter six.

b) So, things having to do with this seven-year period, or with events immediately following (at the time of Christ's return), form the subject matter making up about two-thirds of the content in this closing book of Scripture.

c) This future time is not only a major subject in this closing book of Scripture but also a major subject of Old Testament prophecy.

(I removed a large section that concluded this chapter, for it dealt with the numerous types found in the OT that depict the Tribulation [e.g. Enoch, Noah, Moses in Exodus, Psalms, Prophets, etc.], things that we have discussed at length many times before. If you would like to read what was removed, let me know and I'll email you the original chapter.)