

CONCERNING THE WAY

July 14, 2009

LESSON 65: THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST



Chapter 7

The Sealing of the 144,000

Chapter 7 is considered an interlude, a parenthesis. After six of the seven seals have been opened, there is a pause in the action while the servants of God are sealed for protection from the judgments that follow. Some things he sees look back in the past, and some things look forward. The seal judgments continue on in the 8th chapter with the breaking of the seventh seal.

Revelation 7:1 *After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree.*

The phrase “after this” tells us there is a transition here, in preparation for the seventh seal. The “four corners” is just a figurative way of saying the four points of the compass. The four winds of the earth also come from the four points of the compass, and the Greek word for winds indicate very destructive winds. So, the act of the angels holding back the winds means this is the “calm before the storm”; the impending judgments still to come.

These three parts of the created order will undergo God’s judgment in events to come:

1. With the sounding of the first trumpet, a third of the trees are burned up (Rev. 8:7).
2. At the second trumpet, a third of the sea becomes blood (Rev. 8:8). At the pouring out of the second bowl, the entire sea becomes blood as of a dead man (Rev. 16:3).
3. At the sounding of the first trumpet, a third of the earth is burned up (Rev. 8:7). At the pouring out of the sixth bowl, the earth is utterly shaken (Rev. 16:18-20).

The earth, the trees, and especially the sea are all important parts of the system of nature which supports life on the planet. Because man will continue to idolize the creation rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25), God will set about to destroy this idol. But none of this can begin until the servants of God are sealed for protection. Even after the judgments have begun, the locusts from the bottomless pit are told not to harm the earth, sea or vegetation, but only men (Revelation 9:4).

The prospect of these judgments coming upon the earth would horrify environmentalists!

“Having at one time been an avid environmentalist and valuing animal life above human life, we are familiar with the pagan religious undercurrents which fuel this movement. Many environmentalists thrill to the sight of a dolphin or whale, yet despise the God of the Bible Who created them all. If environmentalists thrill to a dolphin or hummingbird, how much more marvelous is the One Who spoke and they leapt into existence! He is far more worthy of wonder than the mere work of His hands! To be sure, man has not been a faithful steward of all God has given him, but to deny the Creator while attempting to save the creation is folly as events in this book make plain.” Tony Garland

Revelation 7:2-4 *And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom*

it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, (3) saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads." (4) And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

Some scholars believe this is looking back at something God did before the seal judgments began; others think this happens between the 6th and 7th seals, which is where this chapter occurs. He sealed 144,000 Jews for service to Him.

It wasn't uncommon for members of some workers' guilds to place a mark on their foreheads to identify with the group. This would mean that whoever placed the mark on the worker would stand by him, even though the one making the mark wouldn't necessarily condone everything the worker did. The one who wore the mark, or the seal, would be identified with the one who sealed him.

The text doesn't tell us what the actual seal is, but Revelation 14:1 suggests that it is the name of the Lamb and the Father. Since the seal is on the forehead, it will be easy to see by everyone. People will know they belong to God. This 144,000 is a specific number, so we can trust that it is a literal number. There is no reason to take it as symbolic. We'll also see more about these 144,000 in a later chapter.

"Chapter 7 forms a parenthetical section between the sixth (Rev. 6:12-17) and seventh (Rev. 8:1) seals to answer that question, introducing two groups who will survive the fury of divine judgment. The first, those described in Rev. 7:1-8, are the Jewish evangelists who will be preserved on earth. They will survive the holocaust of divine wrath unleashed by the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments. God will also protect them from the murderous efforts of Antichrist and his henchmen to wipe out believers in the true God. Having survived the wars, famine, unprecedented natural disasters, disease, rampant, unchecked sinfulness, and savage persecution of the Tribulation, they will enter the Millennial Kingdom alive. The second group to escape divine fury (Rev. 7:9-17) are those who will be martyred and thereby ushered into the blissful rest of heaven, where they will be preserved" John MacArthur

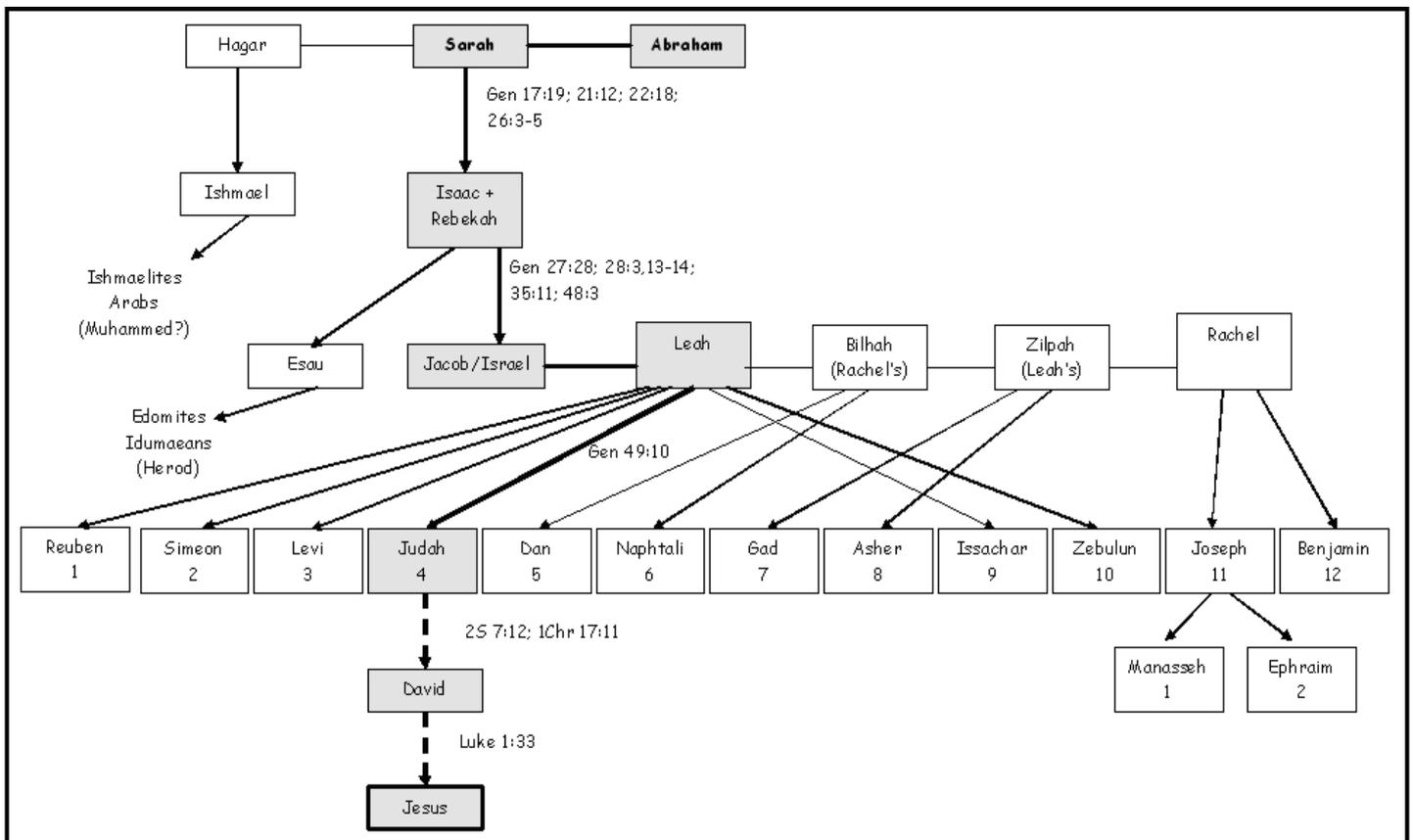
"As blood was put upon the door of the houses of Israel in Egypt so that the angel of death would pass over these houses and strike only those which were not marked, so the seal of God is put upon the forehead of His own so that the angels of judgment, passing through the world, will know those who are God's."
Barnhouse

We may, therefore, conceive of this sealing of the 144,000 as a special and extraordinary impartation of the Holy Ghost; which again connects this vision with particular Old Testament promises. By the mouth of Joel, the Lord said to Israel: "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." This was indeed a general promise, but with it was coupled another, which is not so general, but particular to Israel: "And your sons and your daughters [O Jews] shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions, and also upon the servants and upon the handmaidens in those days will I pour out my Spirit." Peter tells us that this began to be fulfilled in the miracle of Pentecost; but the fulfilment did not end there. There are also particulars in this passage which were not fulfilled upon the primitive Church —particulars which refer to the judgment times, and connect directly to the scenes to which this sealing of the 144,000 is related.

"Wonders in heaven and earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke," are spoken of; and the turning of the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood; . . . In this we distinctly recognize the occurrences under the red horseman of the second seal, the physical prodigies of the sixth seal, and the exact manifestations under the first and fifth trumpets. J. A. Seiss

Revelation 7:5-8 from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, (6) from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, (7) from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the

tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, (8) from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.



This confirms that this is a literal number of Jews that will be set apart as special witnesses for the Lord during the Tribulation. They will not come from any particular church or denomination, and these are NOT Gentiles. There is a tribe missing here, the tribe of Dan. The best reason seems to be that they were the first tribe to apostasize. Both the tribes of Joseph and his son Manasseh are mentioned, so the tribe of Joseph probably represents Joseph's other son Ephraim.

For years some commentators talked about ten missing tribes and where they might have gone, speculating about Indian tribes being descended from Jewish tribes, etc., but you don't hear much of this nonsense any more. Israeli researchers now use DNA to identify which tribe Jews belong to. Some Jews cannot be identified because of centuries of intermarriage with other races, but researchers can identify which tribe about one in three Jewish people are from. Jews from every tribe have been found; there are NO lost tribes!

Some people still try to spiritualize these verses, though. Jehovah's Witnesses still believe this refers to 144,000 of their members! Many false teachers still teach that this refers to the Church, because they are so morbidly prejudiced against anything Jewish.

"What would God have to do to convince us that He is speaking about 144,000 Jews? He says they are Jews. Specifically, He calls them, "the sons of Israel" (Revelation 7:4). He even enumerates them by their tribes, stating that 12,000 will come from each tribe. Does he need to put a flashing neon sign in the sky that says, "I'm talking about Jews?" David Reagan

Revelation 7:9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;

This is the result of the work of the 144,000 evangelists. There is a massive revival, and multitudes of all nations and races turn to Christ. The antichrist and false prophet will persecute them and there will be frequent executions. These are martyrs from all nations. There is going to be a great revival during the Tribulation, and many will die for their faith.

We have an important clue here about deceased believers before they've been resurrected. These people have died and come to heaven, but they must wait until the end of the Tribulation before they receive their glorified bodies. But here you see they are not ghosts or immaterial. They have substance. John could see them, and could tell their nationality and race. He could hear them speak. They wore robes and had hands that could hold palm branches. So there must be some intermediate state a believer is in, with some kind of material body, after they die and their spirit leaves their body, and before they receive their resurrected glorified body.

Revelation 7:10-12 and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." (11) And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, (12) saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

This may be the greatest worship service ever. You have the four Seraphim, all the rest of the angels in heaven, the 24 elders (representing the Church), and the multitude of martyred Tribulation Saints all joining in together to worship God. It is difficult to understand what it will be like to participate in this, to go through what these people will go through, and to stand in heaven and want to continually worship God like this. Maybe some of you can understand worship like this, but I can't comprehend it.

Revelation 7:13-14 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" (14) I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

The sense of "the ones who come out" in Greek is that they are continually coming out, they are still arriving from the Great Tribulation. This is all the people who have trusted Christ sometime during the seven year Tribulation period and have been martyred for their faith. This tells us what the 144,000 evangelists were preaching – the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 7:15-17 "For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. (16) "They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; (17) for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

This is a special promise to these people. On earth the believers during the Tribulation were not safe anywhere. They faced starvation, disease, exposure to the elements, and the pursuit of the antichrist's forces, with no way to escape. They won't have to endure anything like that ever again. They're now in the refuge of almighty God, a place of constant protection. These people will be comforted and rewarded immeasurably for what they went through during the Tribulation. God promises that in heaven we will never suffer again.

He leads them to the still waters which restore the soul (Psalms 23:1-2). This is the living water which the same Shepherd promised the Samaritan woman (John 4:10-11) and which believers in the church age experience through the indwelling Holy Spirit (John 7:38-39). This water is available freely to all who thirst (Revelation 21:6). It is the river of life which will ultimately be found flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb, watering the tree of life (Revelation 22:1-2). In the Millennial Kingdom, a fountain of living water will flow from Jerusalem and revive all that it touches (Ezekiel 47:12; Zechariah 14:8).

Chapter 8

The Seventh Seal – the First Four Trumpet Judgments

To review, there are four main views of Revelation.

1. The psychological view – Revelation is just symbolical or allegorical about the problems and issues that Christians have as they go through life.
2. The 70 AD (Preterist) view – the view that all the things that are spoken of in Revelation were completed by 70 AD in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans.
3. The church history view (historical premillennialism) – it is an outline of the last 2000 years of church history.
4. The futurist, or literal fulfillment view – acknowledging that Revelation is full of symbols and metaphors but seeing that the events spoken of are literal historical events that will take place in the future. This is the view of the original early church, and is the correct view.

Why do so many people have such a big problem with Revelation? Why do so many pastors not teach it? Why do so many people not read it, when it is the only book in the Bible that promises a special blessing to those who do? Why do so many people reject the plain teachings of this book? You don't generally have big arguments among Christians about the Trinity, or about sin, or the nature of Christ, or about salvation by faith in Christ. Why is there so much confusion, ignorance, and outright resistance to this book?

The best answer seems to be Fear. Fear drives people to say "I don't want to hear that, I don't want to talk about this." They are uncomfortable with the idea that God will judge the earth, with the idea that the world is going to get worse and worse, not better. It's very negative! There are many reasons why people fear and reject this book, but because of that they make up different theories to water it down, and not have to take it seriously.

There is also anti-Semitism. One of the biggest fights in the book of Revelation is over who the 144,000 are in chapter 7. It couldn't be any clearer that it is 144,000 JEWS, but most people want to make it out to represent the Church. There can't be any other explanation for this lunacy than anti-Semitism. People just do not want to accept the idea that God still has a plan for the Jews and the nation of Israel.

People would rather play games with the language or make up silly theories than accept the plain sense of the text. Allegorical methods of interpreting the Bible did not come out of just naturally studying the Bible, but from a desire to combine the Bible with Greek philosophy. It did not come from a desire to present the

truths of the Bible, but to pervert them.

This allegorizing of scripture began with a man named Origen in about 250 AD. He rejected the literal sense of the Bible. The Greeks were having trouble with the violent nature of some of the Old Testament at the time, so Origen decided to allegorize the portions of scripture that made people uncomfortable. This became the dominant method of Bible interpretation from this point all the way through the middle ages. It was a desperate effort to avoid the plain meaning of the Bible.

Augustine was another in the 4th century that adopted the allegorical method of interpretation and was also very instrumental in the majority of the church being infected by this view. This is where the Catholic church got some of their unbiblical views such as viewing the Kingdom as the Church, that we're in the Millennium now under the Kingdom rule of the Church, etc. This idea stuck.

Here's what a man named Trig wrote, who was an amillennialist, in his definitive book on Origen:

"Origen's allegorical interpretations, including his view on prophecy, gained wide acceptance in the church of his day. His influence, followed by Constantine's acceptance of Christianity, and Augustine's teachings in the 4th century, are usually cited as the principal cause of premillennialism's eventual replacement by amillennial prophecy."

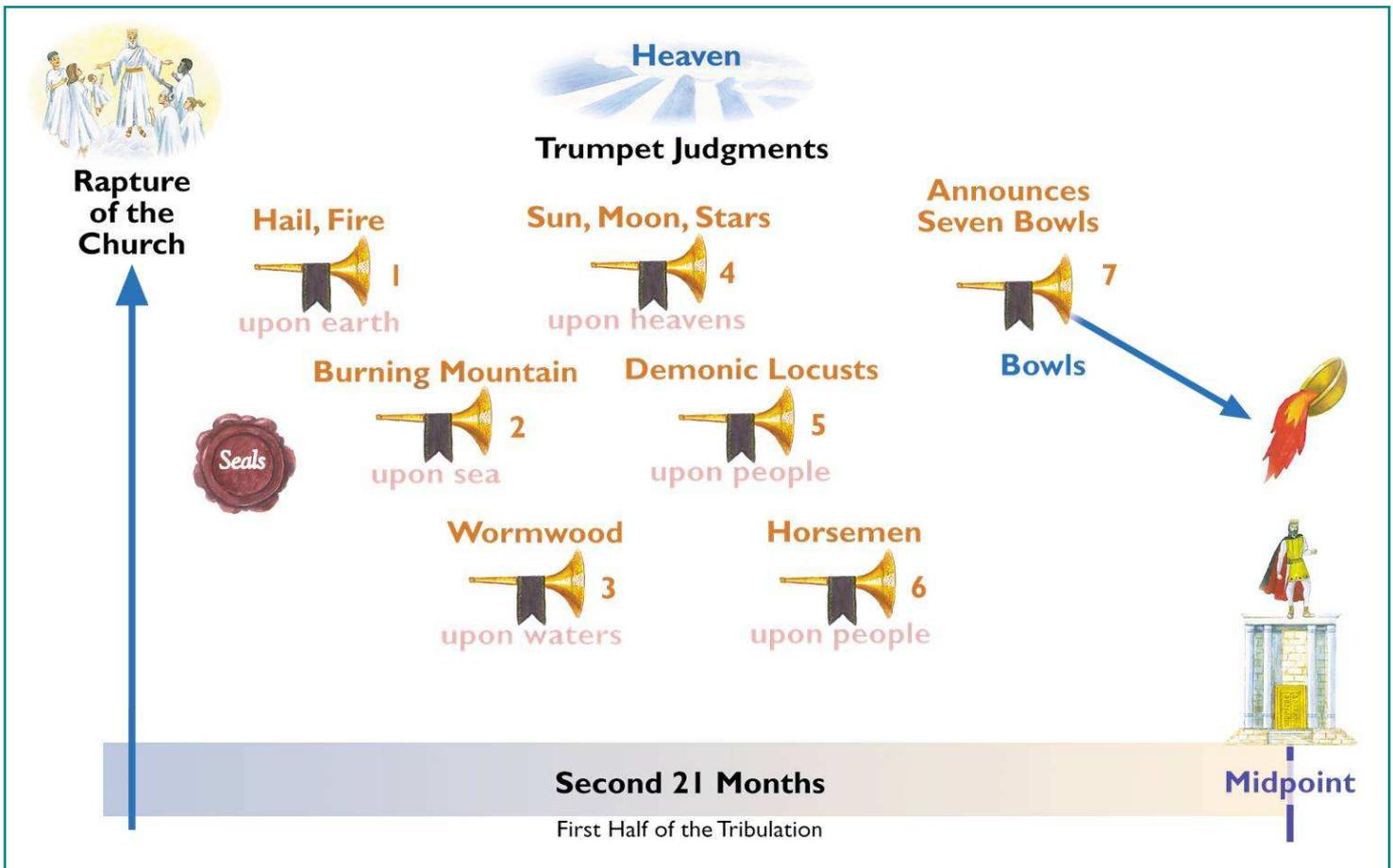
Did you get that? The church was premillennial up until 250 AD when Origen and Augustine's views changed it. The church then saw itself as the Kingdom of God, it saw the church as replacing Israel, and on and on. From then on, much of the church just interpreted the Bible any way they wanted to fit their agenda.

Folks, the Word of God was not meant to be interpreted any way you can think of! It was given to us in plain language, and it is not difficult, God did not intend for it to be difficult to interpret. I'm not saying there are not difficult passages that we need to be careful with, but most of the Bible is easy to understand. We don't need to muddy it up with different interpretations just because you don't like what it says or because it doesn't fit what the popular culture of the day says.

The world changes. Culture changes, philosophy changes, SCIENCE is constantly changing. The Word of God never changes (Proverbs 24:21, Malachi 3:6).

Matthew 24:20-22 **"But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. (21) "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. (22) "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short."**

Is Jesus speaking of something allegorically here, or is He speaking of some literal event, a literal period of time that is going to happen in history? Matthew 24 is what Jesus said to His disciples when they asked Him what would be sign of His coming and the end of the age. He was not speaking allegorically, He answered their questions and told them what would happen just before He came back. And this lines up very well with what John saw coming in Revelation.



Revelation 8:1 When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

Now that God’s servants have been sealed, the seventh seal can be opened. Does this literally mean about a half an hour? Of course it does, there is no reason to interpret it any differently. There is a pause in what’s happening in heaven. The thunder coming from the throne of God will stop, the praise and worship will stop. Heaven is silent in anticipation of the catastrophic judgments which are about to happen. Zephaniah 1:7 speaks of this – in fact the whole chapter is about the Day of the Lord. These next four judgments will devastate the life support systems of the earth.

“The implication is that when the judgment about to happen becomes visible as the seventh seal is broken and the scroll unrolled, both the redeemed and the angels are reduced to silence in anticipation of the grim reality of the destruction they see written on the scroll. The half an hour of silence is the calm before the storm. It is the silence of foreboding, of intense expectation, of awe at what God is about to do.” John MacArthur

Revelation 8:2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

There are apparently seven angels, most likely archangels, which continually stand in the presence of God. The Bible only mentions Gabriel (Luke 1:19) and Michael, but apocryphal books say the names of the other five are Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Remiel, and Sariel. These names may not be correct, of course, but those are the traditional names. Notice that angels stand in the presence of God. The 24 elders sit, which gives more evidence that the elders are not angels.



The breaking of the seventh seal starts a series of seven judgments preceded by the sounding of a trumpet by an angel. I want to mention that these trumpets don't have anything to do with the "last trumpet" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:52 that will sound at the Rapture. There are many trumpets used in the Bible, and these are for the purpose of announcing terrible judgments. They all relate to the breaking of the 7th seal.

Revelation 8:3-4 Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. (4) And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.

A golden censer was a bowl which was used to burn incense. The imagery suggests the OT role of the priest. This recalls the bowl of incense in chapter 5 verse 8 that contains the prayers of all the saints. We don't know what all these prayers are, but we know that in chapter six verses 9-10 the martyrs prayed that God would avenge their deaths. Their prayers are about to be answered with the coming seven trumpet judgments.

On the day of atonement, Aaron was instructed to take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar and put the incense on the fire which would form a cloud which would cover the mercy seat—where the Lord's presence was. This cloud served as a protective separation from God's presence "lest he die" (Leviticus 16:12-13). The cloud shielded Aaron from the presence of God. Elsewhere, when a plague had broken out among the people, Aaron was instructed to take a censer with fire and incense among the congregation to make atonement for them. Just like the prayers of the saints, this act of Aaron's was described as intercession (Numbers 16:46-48).

Revelation 8:5-6 Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake. (6) And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.

The prayers go up to God, and the answer comes down to earth. The angel fills the censure with fire from the altar and throws it down to the earth, followed by thunder and lightning and another earthquake. And the angels get ready blow the trumpets to announce the judgments. Do prayers make a difference? You bet they do!

*There is an eye that never sleeps
Beneath the wing of night;
There is an ear that never shuts
When sink the beams of light.
There is an arm that never tires
When human strength gives way;
There is a love that never fails
When earthly loves decay.
That eye is fixed on seraph throngs;
That arm upholds the sky;
That ear is filled with angel songs;
That love is throned on high.
But there's a power which man can wield,
When mortal aid is vain,
That eye, that ear, that love to reach,
That listening ear to gain.
That power is PRAYER, which soars on high,
Through Jesus, to the throne;
And moves the hand which moves the world,
To bring salvation down!*

Seiss, The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation

Revelation 8:7 The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

Do we just take this as a picture of the struggles you and I go through in our Christian lives? Maybe the hail represents the little things that pelt us and sting us every day, and the fire represents the trials we go through. Noooo, I don't think so. This looks similar to the 7th plague that God sent on the Egyptians in Exodus 9:18, and the fire and brimstone He sent against Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18:16. Those were real events and so there is no reason to believe God won't do it again.

Now is this literal blood? Not necessarily, we don't have to be wooden-headed literalists, we are literal when the plain sense makes sense. But real blood doesn't really make sense to us, so we look for another possible meaning. John could be using illustrative language here, and it may only look like blood. It may be some kind of pollution coming down, like acid rain only worse.

However, it could BE literal blood. Don't ask me how, but blood was included in the downpour on the Egyptians, and it is spoken of in Joel 2:30.

But these are literal terrible things coming upon the earth, because God is furious with the world. Why? Because of the world's rejection of Jesus and for killing the saints. The world has made themselves out to be gods (humanism), and has rejected the true God, and God is fed up.

And this is not talking about one third of the land of Israel, but one third of the world! One third of all the trees will be burned up, and ALL the green grass! The word for grass here can mean stalks of grain in their early stages. Some people think there's an inconsistency here. It says that all the grass is burned, but in the next chapter the locusts are told not to harm the green grass. They use this as an excuse to not take these verses literally. But this is silly. If you've ever seen a field of grass and vegetation that has burned, you know that the fire does not kill the seeds. Grass springs back up very quickly. There will be new grass by the time of the fifth trumpet.

This is another verse that horrifies environmentalists. This will upset the balance of nature. Losing this much vegetation will cause havoc in other areas. There will be soil erosion, floods, mudslides, massive air pollution because of all the burning vegetation, and more famine.

No matter what "green" efforts we put into place, there is coming a time that God will judge those attempts by man to worship the creation and wipe out huge parts of it, just to show us that He is the one that is in control, not us. He is the one who should be worshipped, not the earth.

People today are very concerned about saving the environment. Fears about the depletion of the ozone layer, pollution, the destruction of the rain forests, and global warming are constantly in the news. There is a passionate concern to save endangered species, everything from whales to spotted owls to California condors, and a host of lesser-known species. For many, protecting the environment has become far more than a concern for health and safety; it has become an issue of idolatry, as they worship "Mother Nature" by trying to protect and perpetuate the earth. . . . Fallen mankind has failed to recognize and honor God as Creator, choosing instead to make a god out of the earth. But the environmental, evolutionary pantheism that devalues man, elevates animals and plants, and ignores the Creator will be severely judged. "Earth Day" that year will be a gloomy and dismal affair; in a scorched and ravaged world there will be little of the environment left to celebrate. MacArthur

Revelation 8:8-9 The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, (9) and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

The first trumpet was judgment on the earth; this one will bring judgment on the sea. This reminds us of the first plague on Egypt which turned the waters to blood.

So is an actual burning mountain going to be thrown into the sea? No, this is using comparative language. John is describing something he can't understand the best way he can. It is something that looks like a great burning mountain. We don't know what this is, it could be another large asteroid; it could even be a huge nuclear cloud or something completely supernatural. Whatever it is, it kills a third of all life in the oceans and destroys a third of the ships, which isn't hard to imagine considering that something of this size will cause an explosion in the ocean that will create tremendous tidal waves, so that everything close to a seashore will be obliterated.

The destruction of the sea will cause tremendous upheaval to the food chain which supports all life on the planet. God is systematically removing every means by which man can continue to imagine himself as independent of the one true God.

God created the sea to be a blessing to mankind, to provide food, oxygen (much of Earth's oxygen comes from the phytoplankton and algae in the world's oceans), and water from the rainstorms on the land that is

originally gathered up by evaporation from the oceans. But people have repaid God's gracious provision with ingratitude and idolatry, revering the sea as the supposed source of their remotest evolutionary ancestors. As He had devastated the land environment, the true God judges the sea. MacArthur

Revelation 8:10-11 The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters. (11) The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.

This judgment is against the freshwater sources on earth. Again, "star" is mistranslated, it should be asteroid. Scientists are telling us that asteroids are going to hit the earth eventually, but the Bible has been saying that all along. But they don't want to believe the Bible. "Wormwood" means "bitter". It refers to a particularly bitter herb that had medicinal value. This asteroid poisons a third of the rivers and springs, and it kills many people.

This, of course, will cause more deaths because many more people will be unable to get fresh water and will die of thirst. Again, God is systematically setting about to remove all the props which allow the earth dwellers to imagine there is no God.

Revelation 8:12 The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.

The fourth trumpet judgment is against the heavenly bodies. Again, these are things which have been and still are worshipped by man, and relied on by all mankind for light and health. Losing a third of the light from the sun will have tremendous effects on the weather and growing crops, and make it that much more difficult for vegetation to grow back. More people will die from starvation and freezing to death.

This could mean that the light from all these heavenly bodies is lessened at once, or it could mean that from earth's perspective they are darkened for some reason, maybe due to the pollution in the air from the previous judgments. However it happens, there will be a third less light than normal. That's a big deal.

In the 6th seal judgment, the sun goes completely black, but that must have been temporary. Here it is only partially darkened.

"Nuclear winter refers to the deadly worldwide environmental effects that could result from a major nuclear war. Such a war could bring on nuclear winter by causing disastrous changes in the earth's atmosphere and climate.

Nuclear winter could begin to develop from city fires created by the extreme heat of nuclear explosions. Large amounts of smoke from these fires could spread and cover at half the earth's surface. The smoke could prevent most sunlight from reaching the ground. Temperatures could drop substantially, and rainfall could be reduced. These conditions might last for several months or years. With greatly reduced sunlight, less rain, and lower temperatures, farming could stop, and worldwide famine could result." The World Book Encyclopedia

Revelation 8:13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

Some manuscripts use the word “angel” instead of “eagle” here, but “eagle” is thought to be the most accurate word. It is not terribly unusual in scripture that an animal is made to talk (the serpent in Genesis 3:1-5, Balaam’s donkey in Numbers 22:28-30). This could even be an angel that looks like an eagle (like one of the four living creatures does – Revelation 4:7). As bad as the preceding judgments have been, the last three are going to be even worse.

Again we see that these judgments are against “those who dwell on the earth”, the unbelievers. We can speculate, since the 144,000 were sealed in the last chapter, that believers are protected from these judgments somehow. But we can’t be sure about that.

For a good laugh, I thought I would include some popular symbolic interpretations of these four trumpet judgments. In the left column are the things allegorists consider to be symbols, and on the right are the variety of interpretations that they have for these symbols. This demonstrates the danger of not taking the words of Revelation in their plain sense. Interpretation becomes a free-for-all. Enjoy...

Variation in Symbolic Interpretations

Symbol	Assigned Meaning
Fiery Mountain	Satan; a great heresy; Vespasian; prelacy; Rome; a system of power; the <i>Messianic Kingdom</i> (Daniel 2); the Jewish state; Babylon; Zion; a heathen nation.
Sea	The nations; the church’s baptismal waters; sea of Galilee; pure doctrine; confusion and anarchy; the non-Roman world.
Blood	Corruption of deadly error; introduction of false doctrine; spiritual death and apostasy.
Living Creatures	Destruction of souls; Jews; Ecclesiastics (monks); people.
Ships	Congregations; churches; cities of Palestine; bearers of the gospel; sack of Rome; commerce and means of communication; little states at the time of the Roman empire.
Trees	Men in the haughtiness of pride and position; the elect remnant.
Grass	The people of Israel; the elect remnant.
Great Star	Mohammed; Simon Magus; <i>Montanus</i> ; Arius; Cerinthus; Pelagius; Eleazar; Josephus; Genseric; Attila; Menander; Manes; Novatus; <i>Origen</i>
Sun, Moon, Stars	Cities of Galilee and the people of the Jews; the Jewish temple, Jerusalem, and its population; the Bible, its doctrine, and the ministers of the Church; the decay of imperial government from Valens to the fall of Augustus, false doctrines and corrupt manners of the patriarchs and bishops; the great prevalence of errors, defections, apostasies, and confusions in Christendom; the subversion of the Western imperial government and its dependencies.