

Revelation 6-8a, The Seven Seals

Overview

The scene in the throne room (ch. 4-5) introduces the heavenly actors who control the judgments of the seven seals (6:1-8:5) and seven trumpets (8:6-11:19), just as ch. 12-14 will introduce the satanic actors who dominate the events of the seven vials or bowls in ch. 15-16.

The judgments in chapter 6 are not the contents of the scroll. It cannot be opened until all seven seals are opened (see note). Rather, the action of opening the seals, like the later blowing of trumpets, brings the judgments. But what is in the scroll? Two other passages help us understand what is going on: Matthew 24, and Revelation 10.

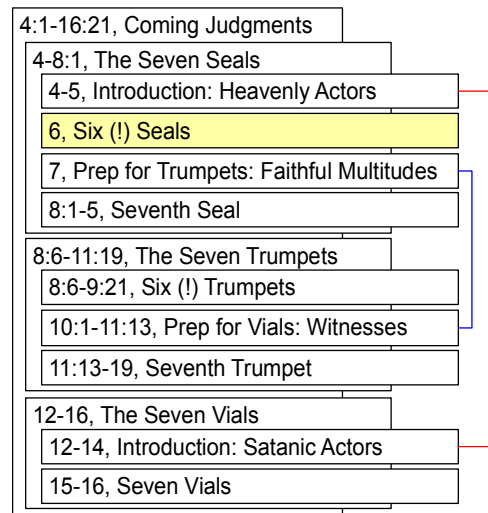


Figure 1: Structure of the Second Vision

Matthew 24 and the Seal Judgments

The judgments in Revelation 6, at least the first five seals, are not revealed for the first time to John in this vision, but were already revealed by the Lord to his disciples in the Olivet Discourse. John’s vision is particularly close to the version of the Discourse in Matthew 24 (Table 1, chart). There, our Lord describes these events as “the beginning of sorrows” (24:8) and says explicitly, “the end is not yet” (24:6). Indeed, these events have characterized the entire era since the first century. Our Lord’s accurate characterization of our era reminds us that he fully knows the challenges we face, and is able to bring us through them.

More likely, the sealed scroll recalls the last chapter of Daniel. Daniel’s visions include many things that extend to the end of the world. At the end of his book, he records a conversation with an angel in which the full meaning of these visions is said to be “shut up and sealed” (chart):

Dan 12:4 But thou, O Daniel, **shut up the words, and seal the book**, even to the time of the end: ... 9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for **the words are closed up and sealed** till the time of the end.

The scroll claimed by the Lamb in Revelation 5 appears to contain this sealed information, which pertains to the very end of time. We are reminded again of God’s sovereign control: he has a plan (a book already written), though we do not have access to it (it is sealed).

Revelation 10

When we get to Revelation 10, we again encounter a heavenly scroll, this time unsealed:

Rev. 10:1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: 2 And he had in his hand **a little book open**: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, ... 8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take **the little book which is open** in the hand of the angel which

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Matthew 24: Beginning of Sorrows (v. 8)	Revelation 6: Seals
5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ ; and shall deceive many.	1 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 saying, Come and see. 2 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.
6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars : see that ye be not troubled: for all <i>these things</i> must come to pass, but the end is not yet.	3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. 4 And there went out another horse <i>that was red</i> : and <i>power</i> was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth , and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.
7 ...there shall be famines ...	5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. ...
7 For nation shall rise against nation , and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines , and pestilences , and earthquakes , in divers places. 8 All these <i>are</i> the beginning of sorrows.	7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. 8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword , and with hunger , and with death , and with the beasts of the earth.
9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you : and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.	9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held : 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they <i>were</i> , should be fulfilled.

Table 1: The Seal Judgments in Matthew 24

standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. 9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the **little book**. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. 10 And I took the **little book** out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. 11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

Having eaten this scroll, John is told (v. 11), “Thou must prophesy again.” That is, the contents of this scroll are what we are about to hear in the following chapters.

The open scroll in ch. 10 is probably the scroll from ch. 5, whose seals have now been opened.¹ The identification turns largely on a comparison of John's language with Ezek 2:8-3:14.

Ezek. 2:8 But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. 9 And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; 10 And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and

1 See Bauckham's discussion in *Climax of Prophecy* ch. 9.2. Osborne concurs. See note on “little book.”

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mourning, and woe. 3:1 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. 2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. 3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. ... 14 So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.

The elements of Ezekiel’s vision are distributed between Revelation 5 and Revelation 10. The vision of a hand with a book introduces chapter 5, but the imagery of eating the scroll, and its paradoxical nature as both sweet and bitter, is picked up in Revelation 10 (Table 2, chart).

Ezekiel 2-3	Revelation 5	Revelation 10
2:9 And when I looked,	1 And I saw	1 And I saw
behold, an hand was sent unto me;	in the right hand of him that sat on the throne	2 And [the angel from heaven] had in his hand
and, lo, a roll of a book was therein	a book	... a little book ...
10b ... and it was written within and without:	written within and on the backside,	
10a And he spread it before me;		2 ... a book open ... 8 Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.
3:1 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll , and go speak unto the house of Israel. ... 3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat , and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee.		And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up;
2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. ... 3 ... Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. ...		10 And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey:
14 So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness , in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.		and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

Table 2: Ezekiel 2 and Revelation 10

10:11 suggests that the contents of this one scroll, first introduced sealed in ch. 5, opened in ch. 6-9, and now seen open in ch. 10, are revealed in the final chapters.

Exposition

The sixth seal seems much longer than the others (Figure 2, chart). We will examine whether it is indeed a single structure (6:12-7:17, blue dot), or a shorter seal (orange dot) followed by an interlude (7:1-17).

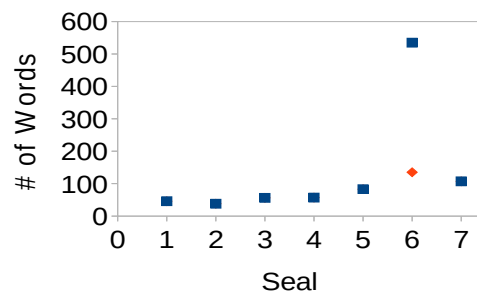


Figure 2: Lengths of the Seals

6:1-8, The First Four Seals

Several distinct features mark off the first four seals from the last three.²

Speaker: Each of the first four seals is introduced by one of the living creatures from ch. 4-5. At 6:9, the speaker changes to the martyrs, marking off the first four as a set.

Invitation: Each seal begins with the angelic invitation, “Come and see” (see note). Only one other place in the book do we hear the invitation, “Come,” in 22:17, with a better prospect,

Rev. 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, **Come**. And let him that heareth say, **Come**. And let him that is athirst **come**. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Without this final invitation, these first four would be depressing. But God’s judgments, as necessary as they are to vindicate his holiness, are not the last word. The final invitation, open to any who wish to receive it, is not to judgment but to life.

Pattern of Zechariah 6: The image of the four horses reflects the four chariots whom the Lord sends forth in Zech 6:1-8, drawn by horses of the same colors as here, to patrol the earth (chart).

Zech 6:1 And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass. 2 In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; 3 And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses. 4 Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? 5 And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing **before the Lord of all the earth**. 6 The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country. 7 And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: **and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth**. So they walked to and fro through the earth.

Here is a paradox. The four horsemen in Revelation 6 clearly reflect wickedness and bring widespread human disaster, yet the background in Zechariah suggests that they are sent forth by the Lord, from his presence (Zech 6:5). We should remember that evil spirits as well as holy angels are subject to the God of heaven, as the story in 1 Kings 22 shows.

1 Ki 22:19 And [Micaiah] said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and **all the host of heaven standing by him** on his right hand and on his left. 20 And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. 21 And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. 22 And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and **I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets**. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: **go forth, and do so**. 23 Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.

Throughout the judgments and disasters of the Revelation, we must hold fast to this insight: the Lord is in control, and bends evil as well as good to his purposes.

The Four Judgments: The judgments of the four horsemen reflect another OT image, summarized in v. 8, and in Ezekiel 14. (See note.)

² See note on the 4-3 pattern here, in the bowls and trumpets, and perhaps elsewhere.

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Rev 6:8b And power was given unto ~~them~~ him over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with **sword**, and with **hunger**, and with **death**, and with the **beasts** of the earth.

Eze 14:21 For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the **sword**, and the **famine**, and the noisome **beast**, and the **pestilence [LXX death]**, to cut off from it man and beast?

Ezekiel’s judgments in turn are a synopsis of the categories of blessing for obedience and punishment for apostasy in Leviticus 26 (Table 3, chart). These are a repeated theme throughout the OT, and they will be helpful to us in understanding the judgments throughout the Revelation. In addition to the summary in 6:8, some of them are reflected in specific seals.³

Ezek 14:21	Lev 26:3 If you walk in my statutes ...	Lev 26:14 If ye will not hearken unto me ...	Horsemen of Revelation 6
Sword	6c neither shall the sword go through your land. 7 And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword .	17 And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.	6:4, Red Horse
Famine	10 And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new.	20 And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits.	6:5, Black Horse
Evil beast	6b I will rid evil beasts out of the land,	22 I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate.	6:2, White Horse (!)
Pestilence (LXX Death)	(Exo 15:26 I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.)	16a I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague , 25 I will send the pestilence among you;	6:8, Pale Horse

Table 3: The Four Judgments

Note the conditions that introduce the four judgments in Leviticus 26. A people that submits itself to the law of God will be protected from these disasters, but a people that will not hear him will suffer them.

The consistency of this theme puts a positive spin on the first four seals. These are not the capricious acts of a heartless God toying with his helpless creatures, but responses to the persistent disobedience of the human race, vindicating his holiness and his justice. As we will see in the sixth seal, they are a final call to sinners to repent:

Isa 26:9 ... when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

1-2, The First Seal: Antichrist

6:1 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 saying, Come and see.—The voice of the angel is compared with thunder, an insight on which we will draw later (see note).

³ Jer 15:2 has a similar pattern, but replacing the beasts with captivity.

2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown στέφανος G4735 was given unto him:—The white horse and crown anticipate the Lord’s return in Revelation 19 (chart),

Rev 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a **white horse**; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were **many crowns διαδήμα G1238**; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. . . . 15 And out of his mouth goeth a **sharp sword**, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a **rod of iron**:

On this basis, some⁴ understand this horseman to represent Christ, or the spread of his gospel throughout the world. But comparing the first five seals with Matthew 24 suggests that the reference is rather to the false Christs against whom the Lord warned.⁵ The superficial similarity reflects the counterfeit nature of the spirit of antichrist, seeking to take the place of Christ, but two details remind us that these are after all distinct: the horseman’s weapons, and his crown.

Instead of the bow carried by the horseman in Revelation 6, Messiah’s weapons in Revelation 19 are a sword and a rod of iron.⁶ But the bow is the weapon of Gog in Ezek 38-39, who is an archetype of the Antichrist:

Eze 39:3 And I will smite **thy bow** out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand.

Both riders wear crowns. But the crowns are different. The horseman of Revelation 6 wears a single στέφανος G4735, the wreath of laurel awarded to the victor in an athletic contest, or as an award for military valor, but the rider in Revelation 19 wears many διαδήματα G1238, royal crowns. In chapter 6 we meet a foe with great military power but no true title to reign; in chapter 19, we are presented with the king of all earthly kings and lord of all earthly lords (17:14; 19:16).

Notice that the crown “was given unto him,” a verb that often describes the permission that God gives the wicked. We see it again in the second horseman (6:4), the summary in 6:8, and other forces of evil (7:2; 9:3, 5; 13:5, 7, 15; 16:6). John wants us to understand that whatever evil comes upon the earth, it is completely under God’s control, and subject to his permission.

and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.—This verse is the first time that a wicked power overcomes νικάω G3528, which up until now has been used only of faithful believers (ch. 2-3) or of the Lord Jesus (Figure 3). Twice more an evil character will “overcome,” both times called “the beast,” the coming Antichrist.⁷ The first is the beast from the abyss:

Rev. 11:7 And when they shall have finished their testimony,

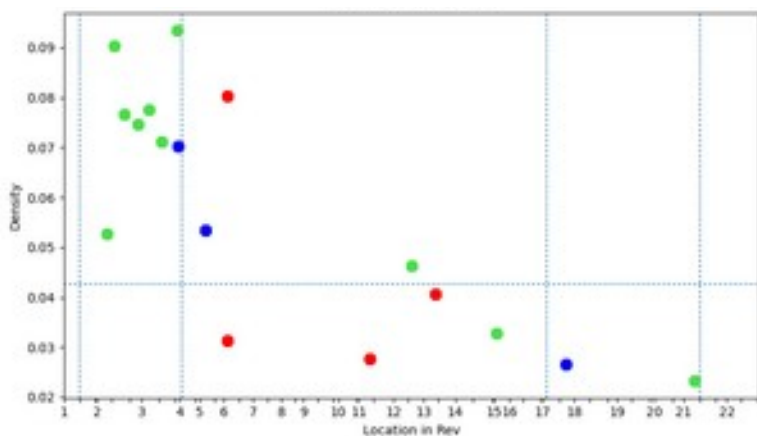


Figure 3: νικάω G3528 in Revelation. **Blue** = Christ (3x), **Red** = evil (4x), **Green** = believers (10x)

4 Starting with Irenaeus, and including Alford, Hendricksen, Hodges, and Ladd (spread of the gospel).
 5 Rissi, *Interpretation* 18 no 4 Oct 1964, p 407-418, anticipates many of my points, and I borrow some from him.
 6 In the NT, the Lord never wields a bow, only a sword. But see note for OT instances of the Lord’s bow.

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the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall **overcome** them, and kill them.

The second is the beast from the sea:

Rev. 13:7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to **overcome** them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

The two terms can refer to the same place, as shown by comparing Rom. 10:7 and Deut. 30:13.

Recall the four standard judgments that the Lord promises in Leviticus 26, summarized in Ezek 14:21 and Rev 6:8. Three of them, sword, famine, and pestilence or death, are clearly reflected in the last three horsemen. The first horseman, with his similarity to Christ, is likely meant to reflect the judgment of the evil beasts, described further in chapters 11 and 13.

The warning against Antichrists is the first element in our Lord's teaching to his disciples in Matthew 24 of what to expect after his departure. It is a persistent characteristic of the church age. Paul warns the Thessalonians of this danger of someone usurping God's position (chart):

2Th. 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [of Christ] shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and **that man of sin** be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who **opposeth and exalteth himself above** all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

This individual has two characteristics: he opposes God, and exalts himself to take God's place. Anticipating this ultimate antichrist, subordinate counterfeits seek to infiltrate the church:

2Cor. 11:13 For such are **false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.** 14 And no marvel; for **Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.** 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

In his epistles, John introduces the term "antichrist," or opponent of Christ:

1John 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that **antichrist** shall come, even now are there many **antichrists**; whereby we know that it is the last time.

1John 2:22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is **antichrist**, that denieth the Father and the Son.

1John 4:3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of **antichrist**, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

2John 7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an **antichrist**.

In his age, the spirit of antichrist focused on denying the incarnation. It can attack other facets of his person and work as well. We saw this spirit at work in the letters to the churches, in the form of the Nicolaitan doctrine promoted by the false teachers John calls "Balaam" and "Jezebel," promoting compromise with idolatry and fornication.

This counterfeit can be very difficult to detect, as the similarities between the horsemen of Revelation 6 and 19 shows. But making this distinction is critical to maintaining spiritual health.

7 Alford takes the double application of $\nu\kappa\acute{\alpha}\omega$ G3528 to this character as conclusive evidence that it must represent Christ, discounting the two other clear applications in ch. 11 and 13 to the Antichrist.

This spirit of Antichrist seeks to divert people from the true Savior to false hopes. We must constantly guard against it.

3-4, The Second Seal: Warfare

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. 4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.—The next horseman brings the first of the four OT judgments, the scourge of warfare.⁸ Again that this plague is only by God’s permission (“given to him”).

5-6, The Third Seal: Famine

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.—The second classic judgment is famine, a common consequence of warfare. The balances reflect the extreme care with which food is distributed in such conditions, as in Leviticus 26 (chart),⁹

Lev 26:26 And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and **they shall deliver you your bread again by weight:** and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied.

The figure is part of Ezekiel’s prediction of the siege of Jerusalem:

Eze 4:16 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and **they shall eat bread by weight,** and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment:

Recall the famine in Samaria when it was besieged by the Syrian king Ben-Hadad:

2Ki 6:25 And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver.

Who would bother to measure out dove’s dung? But when there is little else to eat, a cup of it costs five pieces of silver.

The same story illuminates the next verse, which shows God’s mercy in the midst of judgment.

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say,—From the description of the heavenly throne room in Revelation 4, we realize that this voice comes from the throne. God himself mitigates the impact of the famine.

A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.—First, he recalls Elisha’s prophecy during the siege of Samaria and the resulting famine:

2Ki 7:1 Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.

8 Mounce, taking the first horseman as external conquest, sees the second as internal strife. The clear match of the first five seals with Matthew 24 encourages us to see here “wars” in which “nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (Matt 24:6-7). But John’s language is broad enough to include civil strife.

9 Compare also Ezek 4:10ff

The promise is patterned on Elisha’s promise, but the units are different. If we compare the units and prices (Table 4, see note) the prices promised here *during the famine* are about five times the prices promised in Samaria *after* the siege was lifted, and indeed they should be higher if this judgment is to be painful.

The allusion to the Elisha’s promise has two facets. It shows that the extent is divinely limited, confirmed by the protection of oil and wine.¹⁰ But a comparison of the prices confirms that this is describing the middle of the famine, not its end as in 2 Kings 7.

	2 Kings 7	Revelation 6
Volume	Measure: seah ~ 12 liters	Measure: choenix ~ 1 liter
Cost	Shekel ~ 10 grams of silver	Penny ~ 5 grams of silver
Price	0.83 grams/liter	5 grams/liter

Table 4: Food prices in Kings and Revelation

7-8a, The Fourth Seal: Death

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. 8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.—This is the second time we have seen “death and hell.” The first time was in the Lord’s identification of himself in 1:18,

Rev. 1:18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of **hell** and of **death**.

We will encounter them again in ch. 20, where we see the distinction between hell (ᾠδεις G86, often translated “the grave”) as the temporary place of the dead and the eternal lake of fire:

Rev. 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and **death** and **hell** delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And **death** and **hell** were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

The only other instance of the pair in the NT is in 1 Corinthians, quoting Hos 13:14,

1Cor. 15:55 O **death**, where is thy sting? O **grave [hell]**, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the **victory νικος G3534** through our Lord Jesus Christ.

These two foes are personified as enemies that the Lord destroys. “Victory” is the noun corresponding the verb “overcome” that John repeatedly uses to describe our triumph.

So faced by the four terrifying horsemen, we are assured that God remains in control. In the first two, we are told that their power is “given unto them.” The third, the famine, comes with the assuring voice from the throne, while the Lord has already given the answer to the fourth in 1:18.

8b, Summary of the Four Seals

And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.—The plural “them”¹¹ draws back to summarize all four horsemen, recalling God’s words through Ezekiel (chart):

10 Hemer p. 158 (cf. Caird) relates this to a decree of Domitian in AD 92 to cut down half of the vineyards in the provinces, either to remove competition from Italian vintners or to increase grain production. But Rissi demurs.

11 While αὐτοῖς has support from more manuscripts (including Family 35), Hodges and Farstad do not describe it with their Gothic M representing an overwhelming majority, but assign it to a significant group of mss (M^d) that join with the older mss in reading αὐτοῖς.

Eze 14:21 For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence (LXX death), to cut off from it man and beast?

When we recognize the rider on the white horse as the spirit of Antichrist, later described (Revelation 11, 13) as beasts, these classic judgments summarize the four horsemen.

9-11, The Fifth Seal: The Martyrs

Now the speaker changes, as it will for the sixth and seventh seals (Table 5, chart). Instead of the living creatures of the first four seals, we now hear the voice of the martyrs.

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar—We consider first the altar itself, then the significance of “under the altar,” and finally the sacrifice that is offered.

The Heavenly Altar: We learned in Hebrews of the heavenly sanctuary, and the Revelation shows us numerous details of this sanctuary (chart, see note). We will read of the temple of God in heaven, the tabernacle (and in 15:5 “the temple of the tabernacle”), and the ark of the covenant. We have already seen the sea of glass in 4:6, probably corresponding to the brazen sea that Solomon constructed for the temple in 1 Kings, and here we have the first of several references to an altar. One of them (9:13) is expressly said to be the golden altar of incense that stood in the holy place before the veil, while the reference to death here calls to mind the brazen altar in the court. However, throughout it is called simply “the altar.” Perhaps the two are to be identified.¹²

“*Under the Altar*”: This was the destination of the blood of the sacrifices at the brazen altar:

Exo 29:12 And thou shalt take of the blood of the bullock, and put it upon the horns of the altar with thy finger, and **pour all the blood beside the bottom of the altar.**

The Sacrifice: Since here we are considering the death of the martyrs, this imagery would make sense here. Paul actually describes both himself and his readers as sacrifices offered to the Lord:

Phil. 2:17 Yea, and if I be **offered** [as a drink offering] upon the **sacrifice and service** of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

Paul’s imagery here is rich and complex, drawing from the context (chart).

1. Paul describes himself as being “in bonds” in a “palace,” suggesting that the epistle is written from imprisonment. The usual explanation is the letter is written from Rome during his first imprisonment, following immediately at the end of Acts.

Php 1:13 So that **my bonds** in Christ are manifest in all **the palace**, and in all other places;
 14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by **my bonds**, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Ref	Description	Speaker
6:1-8	Four Horsemen 1. Antichrist 2. War 3. Famine 4. Death and Hell	Four Living Creatures from the throne room
6:9-11	5. Martyrdom	The martyrs
6:12-17	6. Great day of God’s wrath	Important, impotent people
7:1-17	(Answer to 6:17)	Angels, believers
8:1-5	7. Epiphany	Trumpets

Table 5: Overview of the Seven Seals

¹² 14 April 2023: based on a fuller survey of the altar in Revelation (see notes on 9:13), I now consider them all to refer to the golden altar, where the martyrs request vengeance (6:9-10) and from where God pours it out (later).

2. His imprisonment might lead to his execution:

Php 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or **by death**. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and **to die** is gain.

3. Prisoners had to pay for their own food, and as a prisoner, Paul could not practice his trade. So the Philippian church has sent repeated gifts to Paul:

Php 4:14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. 15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. 16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

4. Paul describes their gift as a sacrifice to God, which includes a sweet savour, like the meal offering, made of fine flour mixed with frankincense and sprinkled on the animal:

4:18 ... I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of **a sweet smell**, a **sacrifice** acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

In 2:17 it is called both a sacrifice (θυσία G2378) and a sacred service (λειτουργία G3009, “a liturgical service”).

2:17b Yea, and if I be **offered** [as a drink offering] upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

5. Paul in turn anticipates that he may be “offered” upon their sacrifice.

Phil. 2:17 Yea, and if I be **offered** [as a drink offering] upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

The verb “offered” (σπένδω G4689) is another priestly term describing the pouring out of a drink offering, which under the law was poured on top of a primary sacrifice. Paul realizes that he may be put to death (like the martyrs in Rev 6:9), and if this happens, he considers it a drink offering poured out on the earlier offering by the Philippians.

The martyrs’ deaths, like Paul’s, do not in any way deal with sin. The brazen altar was used not only for sin offerings, but also for peace offerings and the whole burnt offering of worship.¹³

the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony [of the Lamb] which they held ἔχω G2192:—Revelation has four other instances of this or similar expressions, and these are the only five verses in the Greek Bible that combine “word” (λόγος G3056) or “commandment” (ἐντολή G1785) with “testimony” (μαρτυρία G3141):

Rev. 1:2 Who bare record μαρτυρέω G3140 of **the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ**, and of all things that he saw.

13 The pouring of blood at the bottom of the altar is mentioned not only at Ex 29:12, but also Lev. 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34; 5:9; 8:15; 9:9. All these references are to sin offerings, which according to Hebrews (10:12,18, 26) have ended with the death of Christ. However, all sacrificial blood, even of offerings to be eaten (peace offerings), was to be poured on the altar (Deut 12:27), and the blood of any slain animal, even for food, was required to be poured out on the ground as an offering to God (Deut 12:16; 15:23). Thus it is not necessary to see the martyrs as any sort of sin offering.

Rev. 1:9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, **for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.**

Rev. 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which **keep τηρέω G5085 the commandments ἐντολή G1785 of God, and have ἔχω G2192 the testimony of Jesus Christ.**

Rev. 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded **for the witness [testimony] of Jesus, and for the word of God**, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

12:17 assigns each of the two nouns “commandment” (or “word”) and “testimony” a distinctive verb. One *keeps* or obeys the word or commandment of God, but *has* the testimony of Jesus Christ. Why do these actions lead to such hatred against the Lord’s people?

First, consider “the word of God.” With “of” phrases, one should always think about the relation between the two nouns. Is “the word of God” a word *about* God (objective genitive), or a word *from* God, one that he speaks (subjective genitive)? The substitution of “commandments of God” for “word of God” in 12:17 suggests that the emphasis is on the authoritative word that God gives us. The appropriate response is to “keep” or obey it.¹⁴ So one reason that unbelievers hate the Lord’s people is that God’s people obey his word.

Deep down, unbelievers know that they are answerable to their creator (Romans 1). They deny God because, as fallen creatures, they cannot obey God’s law. They are ruled by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life. As the Holy Spirit works in the life of the believers, he enables us to overcome these weaknesses, and live lives that are pleasing to God. The unbeliever is deeply jealous of this. It forces him to recognize his own weakness, and also takes away his common excuse for sinning: “I’m no worse than anybody else.” For when he sees the lives of believers, he recognizes that there *are* people compared with whom he is much worse.

Now what about “the testimony of Jesus Christ,” which believers “have”? There are multiple English translations of this word and its relatives (chart):

- μαρτυρία G3141: testimony, witness, record
- μαρτύς G3144: witness(er), martyr
- μαρτυρέω G3140: to bear witness, to bear record

The phrase “testimony of X” appears once in the OT, and twice elsewhere in John:

Psa. 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the **testimony of the LORD is sure [faithful πιστός G4103]**, making wise the simple.

John 1:19 And this is the **record of John**, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

1John 5:9 If we receive the **witness of men**, the **witness of God** is greater: for this is the **witness of God** which he hath testified of his Son.

¹⁴ τηρέω governing λόγος is particularly common in John’s writings with the sense of obeying or following: John 8:51–52, 55; 14:23–24; 15:20; 1 John 2:5; Rev. 1:3; 3:8, 10; 22:7, 9

Revelation 6-8a, The Seven Seals

In all these cases, the genitive is subjective, so we should probably take it this way in the Revelation as well. The “testimony of Jesus Christ” is what he taught, and in particular, what he gives John in this book. John may even have Psa 19:7 in mind, for to him Jesus is the Lord, whose testimony is faithful πιστός G4103 (1:5; 3:14), the word used by the LXX in Psa 19:7.

The phrase is appropriate for John to use, because he alone among the evangelists describes the Lord Jesus as a witness, one who testifies. The Lord lays down the basic principle in his interview with Nicodemus in John 3. In response to Nicodemus’s magisterial “we know that thou art a teacher come from God” (3:2), the Lord responds,

John 3:11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and **testify** that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness [**testimony** μαρτυρία G3141].

Here is the basic requirement for a witness: personal experience of the matter being presented. In John 3, the Lord is attesting to the need for the new birth if one is to enter the kingdom of God, or even to see it. As the one to whom the Father has committed all judgment (John 5:22), he has personal knowledge of this requirement. Later, he said to his physical family,

John 7:7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because **I testify of it**, that the works thereof are evil.

He can bear this testimony authoritatively because he has lived in the world and assessed its wickedness in the light of the word of God. Finally, we have his interview with Pilate:

John 18:37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that **I should bear witness unto the truth**. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

He is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), and so can speak authoritatively of the truth.

The first instance of “testimony of Jesus Christ,” Rev 1:2, is illuminating, particularly when we consider that the copula “and” is lacking in all Greek mss. The phrase “all things that he saw” defines “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ,” and this phrase thus includes the content of this book. In the final chapters we are repeatedly reminded that this word is faithful πιστός, again recalling Psa 19:7,

Rev. 21:5 And he said unto me, Write: for **these words are true and faithful**.

Rev. 22:6 And he said unto me, **These sayings are faithful** and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

So “the testimony of Jesus Christ” is his teaching, including the revelation that he is giving to John. We saw from 12:17 that one *keeps* or obeys the word or command of God, but *has* the testimony of Jesus Christ. What does this mean?

1 John is critical to helping us understand this expression (chart). “Witness” and “record” are the same Greek word μαρτυρία G3141.

1 John 5:9 If we **receive the witness** of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. 10 He that believeth on the Son of God **hath [ἔχω G2192] the witness** in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he **believeth not the record that God gave** of his Son. 11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

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Here the witness in question is the witness of God to his Son. People are said to do three things with it: receive it, have it, and believe it. Think about the verbs as we usually use them: we *have* something as the result of *receiving* it. “Receive” is the action that results in “having.” “Believe” is more general: it can refer either to the act of accepting the testimony (Acts 16:33, subsuming “receive”), or to the ongoing adherence to the testimony (1 Tim 4:12, subsuming “have”). Thus those who have the testimony of Jesus are those who have received his teaching and adopted it. The focus here is not so much on our outward conformity (keeping the word of God) as on our spiritual commitment to the witness that the Lord Jesus has given us. And if we have accepted his testimony, it is natural for us to pass it to others, which makes us witnesses (Acts 1:8 “ye shall be witnesses unto me”), or testifiers, or literally martyrs [μαρτύς G3144]. We think of martyrs as those who have died for their faith, but the word actually means anyone who bears faithful testimony to the Lord.

Why should having or holding the testimony of Jesus cause the world to hate us? Maintaining such a position openly means that we reject any authorities that contradict him, and those are the very authorities that the world follows. This contest between rival witnesses goes back to the garden of Eden (chart). God gave Adam both a commandment and a testimony:

Gen. 2:17 [Commandment:] But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: [Testimony:] for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Satan began his attack with the testimony, not the commandment. He agreed that God had indeed given the commandment, but challenged the testimony:

Gen. 3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, **Ye shall not surely die:** 5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

We, like Adam and Eve, must respond not only to God’s word, but to the testimony of his Son. This is the heart of the gospel message that our Lord proclaimed, and that we are to proclaim:

Mar 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: **repent** ye, and **believe** the gospel.

We repent when we acknowledge that our conduct is contrary to the *word of God*, and express our desire to *keep* that word. We believe when we acknowledge the authority of his Son’s *testimony* above all other authorities, and *hold* that testimony as our standard. In doing so, we condemn the world around us on two counts: their immoral conduct, and their commitment to false authorities. No wonder they hate us!

For these two things, John was exiled to Patmos, and the martyrs were slain. Our reassurance is that the Lord will faithfully reward those who obey God’s word and bear witness to him (20:4).

Next, the martyrs pray for the Lord to take vengeance on their slayers. At first, this prayer seems contrary to the spirit of our Lord when he prayed from the cross for his persecutors (chart):

Luk 23:33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. 34 Then said Jesus, **Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.**

Stephen followed his example when the Sanhedrin stoned him:

Revelation 6-8a, The Seven Seals

Act 7:59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, **Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.** And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

And both our Lord and Paul warn us against a spirit of vengeance:

Mat 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Rom 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is **mine**; I will repay, saith the Lord. [Deut 32:35]

Yet here we have the martyrs in heaven, presumably free from all fleshly passion. Stephen, who was certainly “slain for the word of God, and for the testimony [of the Lamb] which [he] held” (v. 9), would be among them. He, with the rest of this righteous multitude, is now crying for vengeance on their persecutors. What’s going on?

It will help us to understand this prayer if we read it in the light of Psalm 79 (chart).

- Psa 79:1 A Psalm of Asaph. O God, the **heathen** are come into **thine** inheritance; **thy** holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.
- 2 The dead bodies of **thy** servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls/of the heaven, **the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts/of the earth.**
- 3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them.
- 4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.
- 5 **How long, LORD?** wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?
- 6 Pour out thy wrath upon the **heathen** that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. ...
- 10 Wherefore should the **heathen** say, Where is their God? let him be known among the **heathen** in our sight by **the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed.**

The martyrs’ circumstances and prayer reflect several features of this Psalm (Table 6).

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord,—Here we have the first echo of Psalm 79, from 79:5 (chart).

They call the Savior “Lord,” not with the usual κύριος G2962 (reflecting Hebrew יהוה H3069), but with δεσπότης G1203, reflecting יהוה H136 (chart). κύριος is the authority of a man over his wife and children. δεσπότης, from which we get the word “despot,” is the authority of a master over his slaves. The usual title “Lord” emphasizes a covenant relation between master and subjects, one that imposes obligations on the lord as well as those under him. This title, “Despot,” describes an absolute authority. The common OT title for God,

Rev 6:10 and Context	Psalm 79
How long, O Lord	5 How long, Lord
Doest thou	1-2, 10, thine inheritance, thy temple, thy servants, thy saints
Avenge our blood	10 Revenging of the blood of thy servants
Them that dwell on the earth	1, 10, the heathen (nations אֲדוּמִי H1471)
(Context: antichrist, “the beast”)	2 beast [singular] of the earth

Table 6: Psalm 79 as Pattern for the Martyrs' Prayer

יהוה יי אדני, is regularly translated δεσπότης κύριος, reminding us that he holds both relations to us: he is despot over his creatures, and covenant Lord to his redeemed. The martyrs appeal to his absolute authority.

holy and true,—This expression shows that they have the Lord Jesus in mind, for it is the title by which he introduced himself to Philadelphia:

Rev. 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith **he that is holy, he that is true**, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

They appeal to both attributes.

His holiness, his utter separateness from sin, would motivate him to deal with those who have rejected “the word of God and the testimony of the Lamb” that they represented.

The adjective “true” strictly means “genuine.” Worldly powers claim the right to be despots over their subjects. For example, Rome claimed that they alone held *ius gladii*, “the power of the sword,” the right to put someone to death. The Jews asked Pilate to execute Jesus because

John 18:31 It is not lawful for us to put any man to death,

Usurping despots may claim the right to execute disciples of the Lord Jesus. The martyrs call on the Lord Jesus, the only genuine despot, to assert his authority and honor their witness.

This plea to the Lord as the true or genuine despot recalls the references to God’s honor in Psalm 79. What is at issue is not the pain caused to the martyrs, but the offense their death represents to the only one who can justly end the lives of his creatures.

dost thou not judge and avenge our blood—Again, we recall Psalm 79, in particular v. 10.

But some will reply, “Psalm 79 is one of the imprecatory Psalms, characteristic of the legalistic OT, and that spirit is done away in the NT.”¹⁵ This is a false distinction, whether we view the matter from the perspective of the OT or the NT. In the NT, our Savior himself teaches us to look forward to God’s vengeance for evil done to his servants:

Lk 18:7 And **shall not God avenge his own elect**, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? 8 I tell you that **he will avenge them** speedily.

And the OT itself teaches that we should not seek vengeance ourselves:¹⁶

Pro 20:22 **Say not thou, I will recompense evil**;
but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

Pro 24:28 Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause;
and deceive not with thy lips.

29 **Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me**:
I will render to the man according to his work.

We are not to seek vengeance. We are to love our enemies and bless those who abuse us, praying that they might be saved. But this does not mean that there is no vengeance. Prov 20:22 urges us to “wait on the Lord” rather than avenging ourselves, and two exhortations in the epistles echo

15 I discuss the imprecatory Psalms more fully in the study of Psalm 35 at https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/psalms/notes/Ps_34thru41.pdf.

16 Paul’s warning against personal vengeance in Rom 12:19 is based in the OT (Deut 32:35).

the distinction between personal and divine vengeance. Peter recalls our Lord’s gracious attitude on the cross, but reminds us that a higher authority reserves final judgment:

1 Pet 2:23 Who, when he was reviled, **reviled not again**; when he suffered, he **threatened not**; but **committed himself to him that judgeth** righteously:

And Paul tells us to step back and allow God’s wrath room to work, basing his teaching in the OT:

Rom 12:19 Dearly beloved, **avenge not yourselves**, but rather **give place unto [God’s] wrath**: for it is written, **Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord**. [Deut 32:35]

Paul, facing execution in his last letter to Timothy, gives us a striking example both of love for his enemies and of recognition of God’s ultimate vengeance (Table 7, chart). First he prays for God’s

	Paul (2 Tim 4)	Our Lord
Divine Vengeance	14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: 15 Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.	Matt 23 (7x) Woe unto you , scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites 23:33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? ... 35 ... upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, ...
Personal Forgiveness	16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.	Lk 23:34 34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.

Table 7: Examples of the Two Kinds of Vengeance

vengeance against the deliberate opposition of Alexander the coppersmith.¹⁷ But then he graciously forgives those who did not have the courage to defend him at his trial.

He is observing a distinction that our Savior made. On the cross, he prayed for the forgiveness of the Roman soldiers, who were only doing their duty and did not see that they were attacking God. But earlier that week, he said clearly to the Jewish leaders, who plotted his death, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites” (Matt. 23:13–15, 23, 25, 27, 29), and declared that because they persecuted the prophets, they were under God’s condemnation.¹⁸

on them that dwell on the earth?—The expression appears eight times in the Revelation (Rev. 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 14; 17:2, 8), always describing those who are in opposition to God (chart). “Dwell” κατοικέω G2730 means to settle down and reside, and contrasts with παροικέω G3939 and its cognates παροικία G3940 “pilgrimage” and πάροικος G3941 “stranger, pilgrim,” which refer to transients. Think of our modern debate about immigrants compared with citizens.

The Bible teaches us to view our relation to the world as that of a stranger, a visitor, a pilgrim, and not of a citizen:

1Pet. 1:17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your **sojourning** here in fear:

1Pet. 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as **strangers** and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

17 Alexander may have been motivated by a loss in market for idols among believers. Recall the silversmiths in Ephesus, Acts 19:24-27.

18 Stephen’s prayer in Acts 7 is different. His killers *do* know what they are doing. He appears to be following the Lord’s exhortation to bless them who persecute us, Matt 5:44.

As the children of Abraham by faith, we follow his example:

Heb. 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9 By faith he **sojourned** in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Paul reminds the Philippians,

Phil. 3:20 For our conversation (πολίτευμα G4175 state, commonwealth) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Here, the persecution is attributed to the earth-dwellers, recalling another feature of Psalm 79, its emphasis on the opposition of the גוים, the pagan nations (“the heathen”). But we will learn at the end of the book who has led the nations in this persecution (chart):

Rev. 19:1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: 2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for **he hath judged the great whore**,¹⁹ which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath **avenged the blood of his servants** at her hand.

This is the idolatrous associate of the beast from the earth of ch. 13, reminding us once more of Psalm 79, where in Hebrew “beasts” is actually singular:

Ps 79:2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto **the beasts of the earth**.

Now we have the Lord’s answer to the plea of his faithful witnesses.

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them;—They are given the reward for overcoming that the Lord promised the saints in Sardis:

Rev 3:4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. 5 **He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment;** and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

In 3:5, the white garments are given to those who overcome νικάω G3528, who are victorious, so at first we are surprised to see them worn by those who have been overcome by the forces of evil (11:7). But God’s standard of victory is not the world’s. Our Savior overcame by being faithful unto death, and that is our path of victory as well.

and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.—Johnson²⁰ helpfully compares Peter’s explanation of the delay in the Lord’s coming:

19 In the OT, overwhelmingly of apostate Israel. Alford: “the figure here used, of a harlot who has committed fornication with secular kings and peoples, is frequent in the prophets, and has one principal meaning and application, viz. to God’s church and people that had forsaken Him and attached herself to others. In eighteen places out of twenty-one where the figure occurs, such is its import; viz. in Isa 1:21; Jer 2:20; Jer 3:1; Jer 3:6; Jer 3:8; Eze 16:15-16; Eze 16:28; Eze 16:31; Eze 16:35; Eze 16:41; Eze 23:5; Eze 23:19; Eze 23:44; Hos 2:5; Hos 3:3; Hos 4:15, Mic 1:7).” He concludes that it refers to Papal Rome.

20 Triumph of the Lamb

2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Note the emphasis on “us-ward.” The domain of “any” and “all” is the company that he has chosen for himself, those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life from the foundation of the world (Rev 17:8). God has ordained not only a roster of the elect who must be gathered in, but also a roster of the martyrs.

6:12-17, The Sixth Seal

We have found the Lord’s words in Matthew 24 a helpful roadmap to the seal judgments. Matt 24:1-12, covering the first five seals, are “the beginning of sorrows” (24:8), and the disciples are warned not to confuse them with “the end” (24:6 “the end is not yet”). Then a transition comes:

Mat 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. 15 When ye therefore shall see **the abomination of desolation**, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand **in the holy place**, ... 21 For then shall be **great tribulation**, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. ... 24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

“The abomination of desolation” that “stands in the holy place” is probably the basis for Paul’s “man of sin,” who also usurps the place of divine worship:

2Th 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the day of Christ, v. 2] shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that **man of sin** be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that **he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.**

This insight suggests a extension of Table 5 to align it with Matthew 24 (Table 8, chart). The fifth seal, describing the martyrs, probably bridges “the beginning of sorrows” (Matt 24:9) and “great tribulation.”

After describing the time of great tribulation, the Lord continues with words that John virtually quotes in the

sixth seal (Table 9, chart). Since the time of our Lord, the events of the first five seals have been common, but the sixth seal lies in the future, after the manifestation of the Antichrist.

Ref	Description	Speaker	Matthew 24
6:1-8	Four Horsemen 1. Antichrist 2. War 3. Famine 4. Death & Hell	Four Living Creatures from the throne room	1-12 the beginning of sorrows (24:8)
6:9-11	5. Martyrdom	The martyrs	14-24 the abomination of desolation ... great tribulation
6:12-17	6. Great day of God's wrath	Important, impotent people	29-30 Final judgments at the Lord's return
7:1-17	(Answer to 6:17)	Angels, believers	
8:1-5	7. Epiphany	Trumpets	

Table 8: Alignment of Matthew 24 with the Seals. Circle shows overlap of fifth seal with two parts of Matthew 24

Revelation 6-8a, The Seven Seals

Matthew 24	Revelation 6
(7 there shall be ... earthquakes , in divers places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.)	12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake ;
29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,	and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;
and the stars shall fall from heaven,	13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.
and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:	14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together;
	and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.
30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven:	
and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn ,	15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; 16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:
and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory .	17 For the great day of his wrath is come ; and who shall be able to stand?

Table 9: Matthew 24 and the Sixth Seal

The events reported in this seal echo numerous OT images of the culmination of history, and it will be helpful to recall them.

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; —Earthquakes (plural) were part of “the beginning of sorrows” (Matt 24:7-8), but now there is a single “great earthquake.” This distinctive earthquake will reappear in the seventh seal (8:5), and the seventh bowl (16:18), and perhaps the seventh trumpet as well (11:19),²¹ accompanied by other signs. It reminds us that this sixth seal runs up to the end.

The OT emphasizes the shaking of the earth as a sign of God’s final judgment and the coming of the Messiah. Here are two of many examples (chart):²²

Isa 13:6 Howl ye; for **the day of the LORD** is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. ... 13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.

Hag 2:6 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and **I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; 7 And I will shake all nations**, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

21 The majority text is divided in whether to include or exclude σεισμός in 11:19.

22 See Bauckham “The Eschatological Earthquake,” ch. 9 in *The Climax of Prophecy*

and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;—The OT prophets predicted these events as precursors of the day of the Lord. For example,

Joe 2:30 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31 **The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood,** before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Isa 34:6 Howl ye; for the day of the LORD *is* at hand; ... 10 **For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.**

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. 14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.—Isaiah in particular anticipates the falling of the stars of heaven and the rolling up of heaven like a scroll, in describing the Lord’s wrath against all nations.²³

Isa 34:2 For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations,
and his fury upon all their armies:

4 And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved,
and **the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll:
and all their host shall fall down,**

as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and **as a falling fig from the fig tree.**

15 And the kings βασιλεύς G935 of the earth, and the great men μεγιστάν G3175, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men,—The dismay of the world’s leaders may also reflect the LXX of Isaiah 34,

Isa 34:12 They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing. [LXX: Her princes shall be no more; for her **kings βασιλεύς G3175** and her **great men μεγιστάν G3175** shall be destroyed.

But this dismay is not limited to the high and mighty:

and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; 16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:—This day has not yet come. Most of the world today denies the Lord. Only when he brings these cataclysmic judgments will they acknowledge a sovereign God (“him that sitteth on the throne”) and a sacrificial Lamb.

Ironically, these two facts are enough for them to exercise repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus (Acts 20:21). In fact, the pairing “him that sitteth on the throne, and the Lamb” recur in 7:10, where the heavenly multitude proclaims,

Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

But they are so hardened in their rebellion that they prefer a futile hope for annihilation over repentance and submission to a gracious and loving Savior. See note for an OT antecedent.

17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?—The question they ask is the basis for the extended interlude in ch. 7. God is about to reveal to John who indeed can stand in the face of such wrath.

²³ Beale in particular emphasizes the closeness of the relation.

Daniel 7	Revelation
2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.	7:1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth
3 And four great beasts came up from the sea , diverse one from another.	13:1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea ,
4 The first was like a lion , and had eagle's wings: ... 5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear , ... 6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard , which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads ; and dominion was given to it. 7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; ... and it had ten horns .	having seven heads [1 + 1+ 4 + 1] and ten horns , and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard , and his feet were as the feet of a bear , and his mouth as the mouth of a lion : and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

Table 10: The four winds bring the beast from the sea

7:1-17, Answer to 6:17

7:1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.—In the OT, the four winds are agents of God’s destructive power (e.g., Jer 49:36). In particular, in Daniel 7, they are the agency that brings forth the four beasts representing the different stages of world empire (Table 10, chart). The seven heads of the beast in Revelation 13 reflects the total number of heads of the individual beasts in Daniel 7.

In Daniel, these beasts, like the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2, represent four successive world empires. The terrible beast that emerges from the sea in Revelation 13 combines the features of Daniel’s four beasts to represent the final Satanic empire.

Chronologically, this observation suggests that this chapter begins at the juncture of Matthew 24:1-12 and 14-24, just before the abomination of desolation is revealed. These winds, and the beast that they will release, are graciously held back by four angels.

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, 3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.—The angels who control the destructive power of the four winds are to restrain them until God’s servants receive a seal. This seal is nowhere said to protect them from persecution,²⁴ but from the locust demons of the fifth trumpet (9:4). (See note for further discussion.)

Now we meet two groups of people who are able to stand before the one upon the throne and the lamb. It is helpful to compare the details given about each of them (Table 11, chart).

4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed:—John learns of the first group by hearing. Perhaps we are to understand that he is still in heaven, while this group is apparently on earth, since their sealing is in view of judgments shortly to be set loose on the earth (v. 3).

24 See Thomas on ch. 14, where the 144,000 reappear on Mount Sion, He takes this as a preview of the millennial bliss of the martyrs, thus implying that they have been slain.

and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.—

These people are identified as Israelites, further reinforced by the enumeration by tribe in vv. 5-8. Many commentators view the use of the term “Israelite” here as figurative, denoting the people of God, in line with Paul’s observations that “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom 9:6), but “they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Gal 3:9). It is true that Israel, as the people of God, in some passages anticipates the church. That image is possible because we are in Christ, who is the perfect Israelite. But in this passage, such a usage is highly unlikely, for two reasons.

Feature	7:4-8	7:9-17
John’s Experience	4 I heard ...	9 I beheld ...
Number	144,000 (12 x 12,000)	a great multitude, which no man could number
Ethnicity	all the tribes of the children of Israel	all nations, and kindreds [tribes], and people, and tongues
Location	Earth? (v. 3 hurt not the earth ... till we have sealed ...)	Heaven (before the throne)

Table 11: Those who are able to stand

1. The two paragraphs explicitly contrast “the tribes of Israel” with “all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.”
2. It’s one thing to suggest that Israel may symbolize the people of God. But what symbolic meaning should one assign to the individual tribes that are here called out?

Some object that these people cannot be ethnic Israelites because since the Assyrian captivity, ten tribes have been lost. But Paul, in his defense before Agrippa, didn’t think any were missing:

Act 26:6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: 7 Unto which promise **our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night,** hope to come.

Another objection to the list’s reference to ethnic Israel is that it corresponds to no other list of the tribes elsewhere in the Bible, and so must be symbolical. There are at least 24 such lists in the OT, and they differ more among themselves than this list does from them. Figure 4 (chart) shows the lists arranged so that the spatial distance between two lists corresponds to their distance from one another based on how many tribe names they share—the more names they share, the closer they are together. The list in Revelation 7 is much closer to most of the other lists than (say) Judges 5 or 1 Chronicles 27, yet no one challenges that these lists describe the historical nation Israel. Its contents are closest to the large cluster of lists from Gen 35, 46, 49,

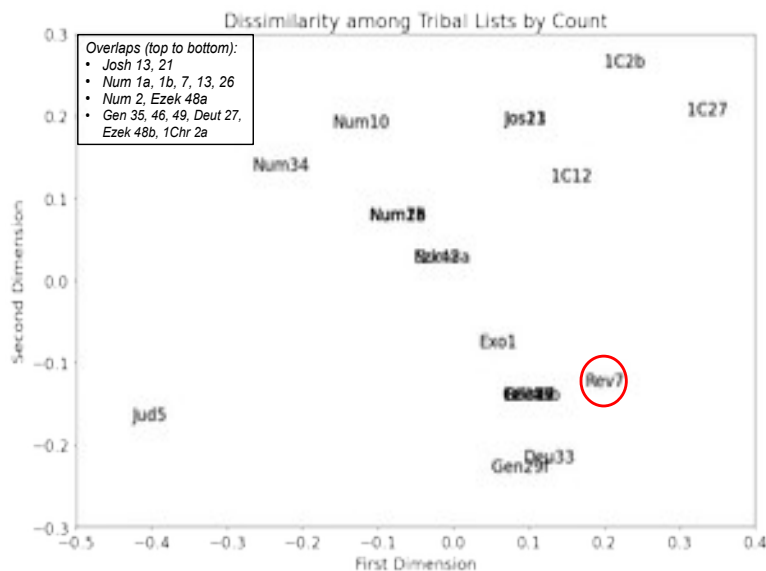


Figure 4: List Dissimilarity by Shared Tribal Names

Revelation 6-8a, The Seven Seals

Deut 27, Ezek 48b, and 1 Chr 2a. Figure 5 (chart) shows a plot based on another measure of distance, one that takes into account the order of the names as well as which names are in a list. This additional information avoids the overlapping clusters in Figure 4, but again Revelation 7 is closer to OT examples than, say, Num 1, 2, and 10, which unquestionably describe ethnic Israelites.

A useful way to look at the question is to ask: If a writer who usually uses “Israel” symbolically, as an image of the church, wanted to refer unambiguously to national Israel, how would he make this clear? The details given here, together with the contrast with v. 9, would be just what one would expect. If these details do not identify Israel in this place as national, it’s doubtful that anything could, and our exegesis has been overtaken by a theological precommitment to denying any distinct role for national Israel in the last days.

The OT contains many texts that clearly *do* promise a future for Israel as a nation, not just as a symbol fulfilled in the church. The Lord promised Zechariah that at his return, he would bring the nation again to himself:

Zec 12:9 And it shall come to pass in that day,
that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.
10 And I will pour upon **the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem,**
the spirit of grace and of supplications:
and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced,
and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son,
and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. ...
13:1 In that day there shall be a fountain opened
to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem
for sin and for uncleanness.

We will take the list in Revelation 7 at face value: the Lord is showing John that the answer to the question of 6:17 consists of two groups of believers, one ethnically Jewish and the other from all nations. At this point in history (just before the appearance of Antichrist), the mass conversion of Israel has not yet happened, but these 144,000 represent the faithful Jewish remnant that maintain their witness on earth during Antichrist’s reign.

5 Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. 6 Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of

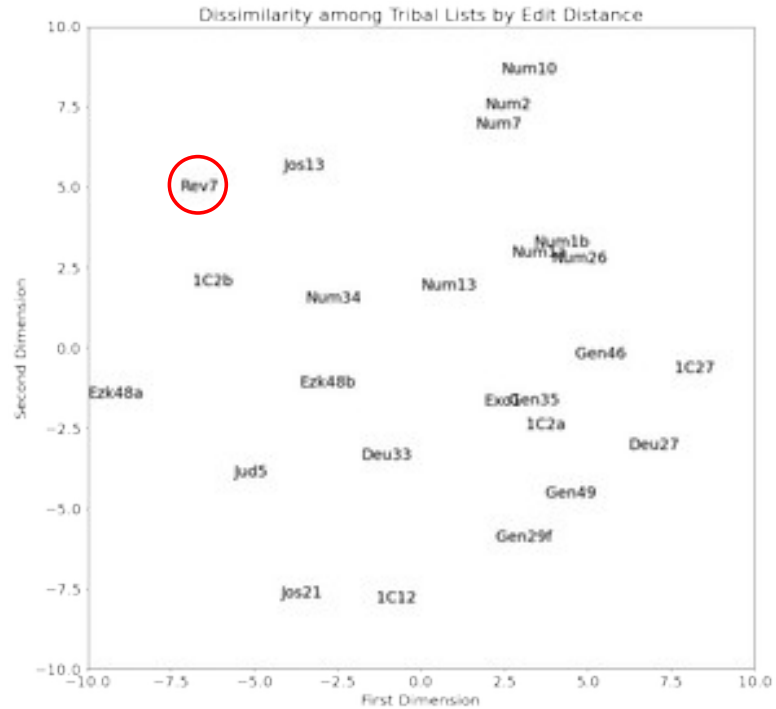


Figure 5: List dissimilarity by Edit Distance

the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. 7 Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. 8 Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.—This enumeration of the tribes calls to mind the censuses that Moses performed at the beginning (Numbers 1) and end (Numbers 26) of Israel’s wilderness wanderings. We will see a group of 144,000 again in 14:1. This may be the same group, showing that at the end of the judgments we are about to see, they have been preserved, just as Israel was preserved during the 40 years it wandered in Sinai. The coming great tribulation under the Antichrist is thus anticipated by Israel’s years in the desert.

While the list as a whole is in line with other censuses of the tribes, two details deserve comment, in view of the Lord’s criticisms of “them which say they are Jews, but are not” in Smyrna (2:9) and Philadelphia (3:9). These are the omission of Dan, and the substitution of the name “Joseph” for “Ephraim.”

Both of these changes may have in mind the story in Judges 17-18 (Figure 6, chart). That story, which occurs soon after Israel enters the land,²⁵ begins in Mount Ephraim, in the home of Micah, who set up a house of gods that included images of Yahweh and also of other gods. Archaeological evidence suggests that these would include Asherah, the great mother god of the Canaanites, usually associated with Baal. Micah recruited a Levite to be his priest, thus operating a corrupt sanctuary in Ephraim. This mixture of idolatry with the worship of Yahweh is an Old Testament parallel to the corruption of Christianity attested in Pergamos (2:14) and Thyatira (2:20). Those churches tolerated people (“Balaam” and “Jezebel”) with the same attitude as the Ephraimite Micah: they encouraged the believers to compromise with the idolatrous culture of the trade guilds and emperor worship. Ephraim is thus the home of the compromised religion that characterized Israel throughout her history. It was the tribe that led the rebellion against the house of David, and Jeroboam, the northern kingdom’s first king, was an Ephraimite (1 Ki 11:26).²⁶ Hosea warns against “the whoredom of Ephraim” (6:10) and “the iniquity of Ephraim” (7:1; 13:12). So the tribe’s name does not appear among the believing Israelites in Revelation 7, but is replaced with the name of Ephraim’s godly father, Joseph.

The same account in Judges that documents the corruption in Ephraim may also explain the omission of Dan, which is also missing in the detailed genealogies of the tribes with which 1 Chronicles begins (1 Chronicles 2-7). Judges 18 tells how the tribe abandoned its assigned territory near the Mediterranean and migrated northward, in the process adopting the corrupted Ephraimite religion that attempted to include idols in the worship of Yahweh. Dan abandoned both its territorial heritage and its spiritual roots. Though it was “of Israel,” it is not part of true Israel, and it is omitted from the company here (as well as from the list in 1 Chronicles 2-7).

Judges: Between Conquest and Kingdom
1:1-3:6, Prolog 1:1-2:5, Social Disintegration 2:6-3:6, Spiritual Departure
3:7-16:31, The Judges
17:1-21:25, Epilog and Diagnosis
17:1-18:31, Spiritual Weakness 17:1-5, An Irregular Sanctuary: Ephraim 17:6, Refrain: No King 17:7-13, An Irregular Levite 18:1a, Refrain: No King 18:1b-32, An Irregular Tribe: Dan
19:1-21:25, Social Strife: Benjamin 19:1a, Refrain: No King 19:2b-21:24, Reconciliation, Rape, Revenge 21:25, Refrain: No King

Figure 6: Structure of Judges 17-21

25 See https://cyber-chapel.org/sermons/judges/notes/Judg_1718.pdf. The story involves Jonathan the grandson of Moses (18:30), and the following story, Judg 19-21, involves Phinehas, grandson of Aaron (20:28). So they represent the first generation born in the land.

26 One meaning of the gentilic “Ephratite” is “a person from Ephraim,” as in 1 Sam 1:1 and Judg 12:5 (Heb).

Now we turn to the second group—larger, from all nations, and assembled in heaven.

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations ἔθνος G1484, and kindreds φυλή G5443, and people λαός G2992, and tongues γλῶσσα G1100,—This fourfold description, emphasizing the universal ethnicity of this multitude, is repeated in Rev 5:9; 11:9; 13:7 (MT includes “people”), and (replacing “kindreds” with “kings” βασιλεύς G935) 10:11. The closest OT parallel is in Daniel, which regularly mentions three of the four as subject to Nebuchadnezzar (3:4, 7, 29; 4:1; 5:19) and Darius (6:25):

Dan 3:4 Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, **O people, nations, and languages**, 5 That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up:

Finally, the Son of Man receives dominion over these groups:

Dan 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that **all people, nations, and languages**, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

John regularly notes the addition of “kindreds.” The Greek word refers to a family or local community, and in the LXX it refers overwhelmingly to the tribes of Israel. In fact, it is the same word translated “tribe” 13 times in vv. 4-8. John seems to be emphasizing that he sees martyred Israelites in this heavenly company, along with all the other nations, reflecting the union of Jew and Gentile in the church (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11).

stood before the throne, and before the Lamb,—This detail puts them in heaven. It also answers the question of 6:17. The unbelievers there, terrified of “him that sitteth on the throne, and ... the Lamb,” asked “who shall be able to stand?” Now we see the answer: the faithful of all nations “stood before the throne and before the Lamb.”

clothed with white robes,—White garments were promised to the overcomers of Sardis (chart):

Rev 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in **white raiment**; ...

Laodicea, proud of its black wool, is urged to prefer the white raiment that Christ can give:

Rev. 3:18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and **white raiment**, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear;

The elders in heaven wear white garments, as well as the crowns promised to overcomers (2:10):

Rev. 4:4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in **white raiment**; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

The martyrs under the altar have not just white clothing, but white robes, stately garments indicative of special honor:

Rev. 6:11 And **white robes** were given unto every one of them;

And the armies that accompany the Lord from heaven are similarly clothed:

Rev. 19:8 And to her was granted that she should be **arrayed in fine linen, clean and white**: for the fine linen is the righteousness [deeds] of saints. . . . 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, **clothed in fine linen, white and clean**.

The only one of these references that emphasizes the nature of the garments as “robes” is 6:11, describing the martyrs. We will shortly learn (v. 14) that this multitude “came out of the great tribulation,” so they may be martyrs as well—not just those from the centuries before the coming of Antichrist, but those from the period of great tribulation that he brings. See note.

and palms in their hands;—Waving palm branches was a celebration of God’s care of his people. The Jews waved them to welcome Jesus as King of the Jews into Jerusalem (John 12:13), and Maccabees (1 Macc. 13:51; 2 Macc. 10:7) tells that when the temple was rededicated after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes, the people celebrated with palm branches.

The clearest OT reference to such celebration is at the feast of tabernacles:

Le 23:40 And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, **branches of palm trees**, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. (cf. Neh 8:15)

This feast celebrated God’s protection of Israel during the wilderness wanderings. We have already noted that the numbering of the tribes in 7:4-8, followed by their reappearance in ch. 14, recalls the two numberings of the tribes before and after those wanderings in Numbers 1 and 26, so it may be most appropriate to see this detail as conveying the same message. The winds are about to blow; the Antichrist is about to be revealed. But before that happens, John is reassured that God will preserve his people during the coming time of great tribulation. This preservation is not physical—we know there are martyrs—but spiritual, ensuring that they do not fall away.

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.—Once again we hear of the throne and the Lamb. The phrase “salvation to X” reflects the Hebrew way of describing possession, and means “X has salvation.” In this case, they are saying that salvation belongs to, is under the control of, God and his son.

The important people in 6:17 recognize that God and the Lamb have great wrath against sin. This multitude has learned that they also have great salvation for those who submit to them.

In Revelation 4-5 we heard many doxologies (Table 12, chart), and this is the next in the series. It is the first one that includes the word “salvation,” a feature that is repeated in ch. 12 and 19. However, the elders in 5:9 build their praise around the recognition that the Lamb has “redeemed” them, linking the two scenes (yellow shading in Table 12).

11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, 12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever.—As in chapter 5, the angels’ worship responds to that of the saints, with a long series of attributes similar to those in 5:12 (blue shading in Table 12).

The repetition of the angelic response to human worship in these two chapters emphasizes that the angels no longer lead the heavenly choir. Under the old covenant, they could recognize and laud his holiness (Isaiah 6, “holy, holy, holy”). But now, after the Lamb’s work is done, their fuller understanding of God’s character flows from his dealings with us.

Revelation 6-8a, The Seven Seals

(Speaker)	1:6 John	4:9, Living Creatures	4:10-11, Elders	5:9-10, Elders: The slain Lamb is worthy to open the book; for he has redeemed us ...	5:12, Angel Host	5:13, All Creation	7:10, Many People	7:11-12, Angels	12:10 Voice from Heaven	19:1 People in Heaven
(Recipient)	Jesus Christ	God	God		Lamb	God & Lamb	God & Lamb	God	God & Christ	Lord our God
(Form)	to ...	to ...	Worthy		Worthy	to ...	to ...	to ...	Now is come	Alleluiah; to ...
Glory	1	1	1		6	3		2		2
Honor		2	2		5	2		5		3
Thanks		3						4		
Power δύναμις G1411			3		1			6	2	4
Blessing					7	1		1		
Riches					2					
Wisdom					3			3		
Strength, might ἰσχύς G2479					4			7		
Power κράτος G2904	2					4				
Salvation							1		1	1
Kingdom									3	
Power ἐξουσία G1849								4		
(Response)	Amen				Amen	Amen →	Amen			

Table 12: Doxologies in the Revelation. Numbers indicate the order of the attributes. Note pairing of reference to salvation by humans (yellow) followed by extensive list of attributes by angels (blue)

Compare the process by which God has brought salvation to us, revealing it over time to his saints, who at first did not completely understand, stimulating the curiosity of the angels (chart):

1Pe 1:12 Unto whom [the OT prophets] it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; **which things the angels desire to look into.**

Our present salvation is part of the process of educating the angels:

Revelation 6-8a, The Seven Seals

Eph 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; 9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: 10 To the intent that now **unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church** the manifold wisdom of God,

Revelation 5 and 7 show the culmination of that process, when the angels see the saints whom God has redeemed and enabled by his Spirit to overcome, finally rejoicing in heaven before him.

Amen.—It’s not clear who is responding to the angelic praise here—perhaps, as in 5:14, it is the four beasts, or perhaps it is John. Or perhaps it is the angels, forming an inclusio with their initial “amen” to mark their entire doxology as their approving response to what the redeemed have said in 7:10.

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 14 And I said unto him, Sir [my lord]²⁷, thou knowest.—The form of the conversation reflects Ezekiel’s experience in the valley of dry bones:

Eze 37:3 And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.

In both cases,

- the seer observes a great multitude (of bones; of people in white robes)
- someone with superior knowledge asks him to explain it, perhaps because the scene has significance that the seer is not exploring with his own questions
- he asks the questioner to give the explanation.

The similarity leads us to compare the two visions in which the questions are embedded.

In Ezekiel, the dry bones represent “the whole house of Israel” (37:11), cut off from the Lord, whom the Lord promises to revive and restore to their land. Here, we see a multitude of spirits in heaven, representing not only “all tribes” [of Israel] (Rev 7:9), but other nations as well. The promised restoration of Israel in Ezekiel thus becomes a type of the victory of the faithful.

And he said to me, These are they which came out of [the] great tribulation (MT),—Ironically, the ones who are able to stand before the throne and the Lamb are those who were willing to suffer tribulation from the world.

and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.—Two grammatical details merit attention: the tense and voice of the verbs.

Contrast first the *aorist tense* of these verbs (“washed,” “made”) with the present tense of “came out” (in Greek, “these are they which are coming out . . . and they washed . . .”). (Bible software with Tense-Voice-Mood encoding can show this.) The washing happened before they came out. First they washed, then they were persecuted.

Next, note the *active voice* of the verbs. The saints do the washing, just as Israel did when they were summoned to meet the Lord on Mount Sinai (chart):

27 Κύριος vocative, unlike the oblique cases, is often used to address non-divine beings, but it does enhance the parallel with LXX’s use of the address in Ezekiel. However, where LXX uses ἐπίσταμαι G1987, John uses οἶδα G1492. The former is rarer in the NT (14 vs. 321, never in John), as well as in the OT (see note).

Revelation 6-8a, The Seven Seals

Exo 19:10 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and **let them wash their clothes**, 11 And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

There is an important contrast here with Rev 1:5. (See note)

Rev 1:5 Unto him that loved us, and washed [bathed] us from our sins in his own blood,

Who does the washing?

Note the different objects. The Lord washes *us*, but we wash our *garments* (a difference marked by distinct Greek verbs). Later we learn that white clothing represents righteous actions:

Rev 19:8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness [deeds] (δικαίωμα G1345) of saints.

And the white garments are promised to those in Sardis who *overcome* (3:5).

So the saints are responsible to make their own garments white, by righteous deeds. But note the qualifying phrase, “in the blood of the Lamb.” Paul might say, “in Christ.” It is only the blood of Christ that enables us to perform deeds that can yield white garments. Otherwise, our best efforts fall under Isaiah’s condemnation:

Is. 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses²⁸ are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

The attempts of the unredeemed at righteous actions are deemed, not white raiment, but filthy rags. But we who have been redeemed, like the Israelites, should purify ourselves day by day in anticipation of meeting him:

1Jn 3:2 ... we know that, **when he shall appear, we shall be like him**; for we shall see him as he is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in him **purifieth himself**, even as he is pure.

15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: —“Serve” λατρεύω G3000 refers to priestly service, mentioned in the Revelation only here and in 22:3, in the eternal state. Contrast this with βασιλεύω G936, what the saints do in the millennium (20:4), which they describe as being on earth (5:10):

Rev. 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall **reign** on the earth.

Rev. 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and **reigned** with Christ a thousand years.

The distinction will be important when we consider the location of the activities of 20:4. As kings and priests, we can exercise our priesthood now (Phil 3:3) and in heaven, but our kingship awaits the coming earthly kingdom.

This distinction is reinforced by the tenses of the verbs. In 7:15a, “they are ... and serve ...” in the present tense, describing the heavenly rest of God’s martyrs. This tense continues through “he that sitteth [now] on the throne [in heaven]. But then we switch to the future tense (“shall

28 LXX δικαιοσύνη, not δικαίωμα as in Rev 19:8, but the context in Isaiah suggests that deeds are in view. δικαιοσύνη (428x in the Greek Bible) is the more generic term, subsuming both righteous behavior (BDAG 3, cf. δικαίωμα, 149x), and the judicial action of declaring just (BDAG 1, 2, cf. δικαίωσις, 3x).

dwell among them,” and throughout 7:16-17), anticipating the coming earthly kingdom and the new heavens and new earth to follow:

and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.—The future promise alludes to the oft-repeated statement in the OT that God desires to dwell among his people (Ex. 25:8; 29:45–46; Num. 35:34; 1 Kings 6:13; Psa. 68:18). He showed this desire in Eden, when he came to walk in the garden in the cool of the day with his creature Adam.



Figure 7: A glove box
(<https://www.belart.com/sidentry-glove-box.html>)

Ex. 25:8 And let them make me a sanctuary; **that I may dwell among them.**

Ex. 29:45 And **I will dwell among** the children of Israel, and will be their God.

The promise is not only for Israel, for David prophesies of the Messiah,

Psa. 68:18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.

Our sin shut us off from the intimate contact of Eden, but the Lord graciously gave his people the tabernacle as a “glove box,”²⁹ to protect them from his glory while still being close to them (Figure 7, chart).

In the future, the Lord’s desire is satisfied. His people are redeemed, and he can dwell among them without the protective barrier of the tabernacle and the priesthood, enjoying intimate fellowship with them. The Lord Jesus, the Son of God, reigns on earth during the Millennium, and of the new heavens and new earth, John will hear,

Rev. 21:3 Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.—This promise is a close paraphrase of two passages in Isaiah (Table 13, chart).

Rev 7:16-17	Isaiah
16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;	49:10 They shall not hunger nor thirst;
neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.	neither shall the heat nor sun smite them:
17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them,	for he that hath mercy on them shall lead [נהיג H5090, guide animals] them,
and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters:	even by the springs of water shall he guide them.
and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.	25:8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces;

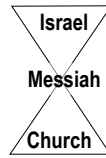
Table 13: Isaiah's Millennial Promises in Revelation 7

29 See https://cyber-chapel.org/sermons/judges/notes/Judg_1718.pdf; see note on the relation of the verb here (σκηνώω G4637) to Hebrew שכן H7931

Revelation 6-8a, The Seven Seals

In Isaiah, the promise is part of the 9th of Isaiah's 12 servant songs (chart, Figure 8).

Isa 49:10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.



		41:8-13	42:1-7	42:19	43:10	43:22-44:5	44:21-23	44:26	48:20	49:1-13	50:4-9	50:10	52:13-53:12
Israel	X		X		X	X	X	X	X				
Messiah	X	X		X						X	X	X	X
Church		X								X	X		X

"Servant" is Mostly Israel
"Servant" is Mostly Messiah

Figure 8: The Servant Songs in Isaiah

In these passages the metaphor of the Servant of the Lord is applied variously to the nation Israel, then the Messiah as the ideal Israelite, and finally to the church as the body of Messiah (and these texts are often quoted in the NT of the church and its mission). In the first eight the servant is mostly Israel, but in the last four, starting with Isaiah 49, the focus is on the Messiah.

Isaiah 49 begins with the Lord's call to his servant to deliver both Israel and the Gentiles (1-6):

Isa 49:1 Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far;
 The LORD hath called me from the womb;
 from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. ...
 5 And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant,
 to bring Jacob again to him,—
 Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD,
 and my God shall be my strength.—
 6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of
 Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel:
 I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles,
 that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Paul and Barnabas quote the last half of v. 6 of themselves in Acts 13:47 when the Jews in Pisidian Antioch reject the gospel, to justify their outreach to the Gentiles. They are part of the church, the bottom of the hourglass.

The servant is despised (7a):

7 Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One,
 to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers,

But the Lord saves him and the people that trust in him:³⁰

Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship,
 because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

8 Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee,
 and in a day of salvation have I helped thee:
 and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people,
to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

9 That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth;
 to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves.

³⁰ See the full exposition at <https://cyber-chapel.org/sermons/isaiah/notes/Isaiah49a.pdf>

He is “to establish the earth,” the physical creation. Next is v. 10, quoted in Rev 7:16-17.

The last clause is from a description of the coming millennial kingdom:

Is. 25:6 And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. 7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death in victory; and **the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces**; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

The references to Jerusalem (“in this mountain”) again focus on the present creation. The verse is also quoted with reference to the new heavens and new earth, in Rev 21:4,

Rev. 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

So the saints in 7:4-8 are on earth, while those in 9-17 are in heaven, awaiting an earthly future.

8:1-5, The Seventh Seal

A strong alignment across the seventh elements of the three series of seven suggests that these elements describe the same point in history, the return of our Lord to set up this earthly kingdom. But the series do not start at the same time. The seals have been active for 2000 years, while we’ll see that the trumpets and bowls have not yet begun. Similarly, the bowls are much more intense than the trumpets, and appear to describe the climax of those judgments. It is often suggested³¹ that the seventh seal contains the trumpets, and the seventh trumpet contains the bowls. This is a useful summary, as long as we keep in mind that the sixth seal points to the return of Christ, which clearly follows the trumpets and bowls (Figure 9, chart).

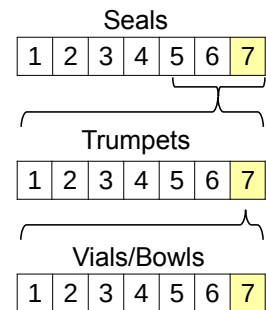


Figure 9:
Temporal relation
of seals, trumpets,
and bowls

Table 15 and Table 14 (charts) show five parallel features.

1. The Lamb (for the seals) or an angel (for the trumpets and bowls) performs the action.
2. The greatest difference among the three is the second element, silence in the seventh seal but great voice(s) in the seventh trumpet and bowl.
3. Third, we see events in the heavenly temple, named in the trumpet and bowl, and identified by the altar in the seal.
4. The fourth element (Table 14) is the wrath of God poured out on the earth. Compare 16:20 with 6:14, confirming our association of the sixth seal with the very end of the series.
5. The fifth element is the most similar, mentioning voices, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake in all three, and adding hail in the trumpet.³²

Let’s work through the elements of the seventh seal in detail.

31 Notably by Thomas, *TMSJ* 4/1 (Spring 1993) 45-66, who cites others.

32 There are numerous textual variations among these lists, even in the majority of the mss. In particular, a significant subset omit the earthquake in the seventh trumpet, perhaps viewing the hail as its substitute. But the impressive similarity among the three lists remains.

Revelation 6-8a, The Seven Seals

	Seventh Seal, 8:1-5	Seventh Trumpet, 11:15-19	Seventh Bowl, 16:17-21
Action	1 And when he had opened the seventh seal,	15 And the seventh angel sounded;	17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air;
Audible Event	there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.		
		and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.	and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.
Events in the Heavenly Temple	2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. 3 And another angel came and stood at the altar , having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.	16 And the four and twenty elders , which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, 17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. ... 19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament:	... out of the temple of heaven ...

Table 15: Comparing the Seventh Seal, Trumpet, and Bowl

	Seventh Seal, 8:1-5	Seventh Trumpet, 11:15-19	Seventh Bowl, 16:17-21
Judgment on the Earth	5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth :	18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come , 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, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.	19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath . 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.
Theophonic Signs	and there were voices , and thunderings , and lightnings , and an earthquake .	and there were lightnings , and voices , and thunderings , and an earthquake , and great hail .	18 And there were voices , and thunders , and lightnings ; and there was a great earthquake , such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

Table 14: Comparing the Seventh Seal, Trumpet, and Bowl (cont.)

8:1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.—Two details invite attention: the silence, and the heavenly location (chart).

The OT enjoins silence when the Lord comes in judgment:

Hab. 2:20 But the LORD is in his holy temple: **let all the earth keep silence** before him.

Zeph. 1:7 **Hold thy peace** at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. 15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

Zech. 2:13 **Be silent**, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.

This silence is applied to the Servant of the Lord in the introduction to Isaiah 53:

Is. 52:15 So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

The silence is said to be “in heaven,” which is the setting of the scene that follows. Note the alternation of earth and heaven so far in the book (Table 16). This alternation can help us understand the chronology.

So far, when we have an earthly scene followed by a heavenly one, we are meant to understand them as overlapping in time.

- While the seven churches contend with compromise and false teachers on earth, God is in control from his heavenly throne.
- While the four horsemen are devastating the earth, the martyrs are crying out to God from the heavenly altar.
- While the 144,000 are contending on earth, the unnumbered multitude of departed saints is worshipping in heaven.

Earth	Heaven
1-3, John on Patmos, seven churches in Asia Minor	4-5, Heavenly Throne Room
6:1-8, first four seals (false Christs, warfare, famine, death)	6:9-11, fifth seal (martyrs in heaven)
6:12-17, sixth seal (despair at the Lord's return)	
7:1-8, 144,000 sealed on earth	7:9-17, unnumbered saints before the Lord
	8:1-6, seventh seal (heavenly judgments)

Table 16: Alternation of Earthly and Heavenly Perspectives

In this overall scheme, we had a picture in the sixth seal of the earthly effects of the Lord’s return, but so far we have not seen what is going on in heaven. The alternation between earth and heaven suggests that the seventh seal is concurrent with the sixth, and we will see that the heavenly events it describes in fact explain the earthly events in the sixth seal.

2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God;—After the silence, we witness events in the heavenly temple. John sees a group of seven angels. We did not see them in the tour of heaven in Revelation 4-5. In chapters 1-3, we learned of seven “angels” or messengers, each associated with one of the seven churches, but these appeared to be human messengers sent by the churches to John, not heavenly beings. The expression here is probably using a Hebrew idiom³³ to emphasize something that that vividly impresses itself on John’s attention. “Look! Seven angels standing before God!”

33 Many commentators associate them with six or seven angels mentioned in Tobit 12:15 and other intertestamental writings, but there are problems with this identification. See note.

The verb is in the perfect tense, “which have been standing before God.” It is as though they were there before, but John had not noticed them until now.

and to them were given seven trumpets.—Trumpets are often associated with the judgments of the day of the Lord in the OT. For example, one of the passages that commanded silence in the day of God’s judgment (Zeph 1:7) goes on to say (chart),

Zeph. 1:14 The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. 15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 A day of the **trumpet** שופר and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

The angels’ trumpets here are probably rams’ horns,³⁴ as in the OT judgment passages and in Exod 19:16-19, which clearly lies behind 8:5. The angels announce God’s invasion of the earth, as he did at Sinai, and as Israel invaded Canaan at Jericho.

3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer;—This is probably the same altar we saw in 6:9, where the souls of the martyrs cried out to God for vengeance.

Rev. 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.—Contrary to Roman Catholic teaching, the angel is not offering the prayers of the saints. Those ascended already in 6:10 without any need for angelic mediation. Rather, the angel adds incense to those prayers.

What is the significance of this incense? Our comparison of the doxologies in the Revelation shows that the angels echo the prayers of saints.

- In 4:10-11 and 5:9-10, the elders declare that the Lamb is worthy of praise, and in 5:12 the angels pick up and echo this declaration.
- In 7:10, the multitude in heaven declare that salvation belongs to God and to the Lamb, and in 7:11-12 the angels say “Amen” to this declaration and burst into praise.

Similarly, we should understand the incense as the angelic endorsement of the prayers of the saints that we have already heard in the fifth seal (Table 17, chart). The saints have been crying out for God’s righteous judgment, and now the angel is endorsing that request.

	People Initiate	Angels Respond
Praise	4:10-11, 5:9-10	5:12
	7:10	7:11-12 “Amen”
Prayer	6:10	8:3-4

Table 17: Angels Echoing Saints

4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.—We are assured that God is aware of both the prayers and the endorsing incense, and what follows may be understood as his response to those prayers.

5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth:—In the common scheme of the seventh actions, the view of heavenly temple is followed by earthly judgment, which in this case echoes Ezekiel 10. Recall the context.

34 See note

Revelation 6-8a, The Seven Seals

Ezekiel went into Babylon in 597 BC, the second of three waves of captivity. His book is organized around three “visions of God,” like John’s experiences in the Revelation (Figure 10, chart). These visions focus on “the glory of God” (5x) or “the glory of the LORD” (10x).³⁵

In the first vision (ch. 1:1-3:15), the glory of the Lord comes to Babylon, riding upon a fiery chariot borne by four cherubim (chart):

Ezek. 1:4 And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. ... 13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.

As Ezekiel looks at the throne that the living creatures support, he sees the one who rides on it:

Eze 1:28 This was the appearance of the likeness of **the glory of the LORD**.

Ezekiel was a priest, and he would expect the glory of the Lord to be in the holy of holies in the temple, not in Babylon. At the end of this first vision, he hears an announcement that is critical for understanding the theme of the book:

Eze 3:12 Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be **the glory of the LORD** from his place.

The translators have missed a common Hebrew idiom in this passage. The preposition “from” is the standard construction for comparisons. A far better translation of the last clause is, “The glory of the Lord is more blessed than his place,” that is, the temple in Jerusalem. The exiles should not mourn their separation from the physical temple. The Lord is with them in Babylon, and it is his presence, the glory of the Lord, with which they should be concerned, not the physical building in which he condescended to be present in Jerusalem.

The presence of the glory of the Lord in Babylon suggests that it is no longer in Jerusalem. In the second vision (chapters 8-11), the Spirit takes Ezekiel to Jerusalem to explain how the glory of the Lord leaves. First he sees the glory of the Lord in the temple in Jerusalem:

Ezek. 8:4 And, behold, **the glory of the God of Israel** was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain.

But he also sees the abominable idolatries being performed, also in the temple:

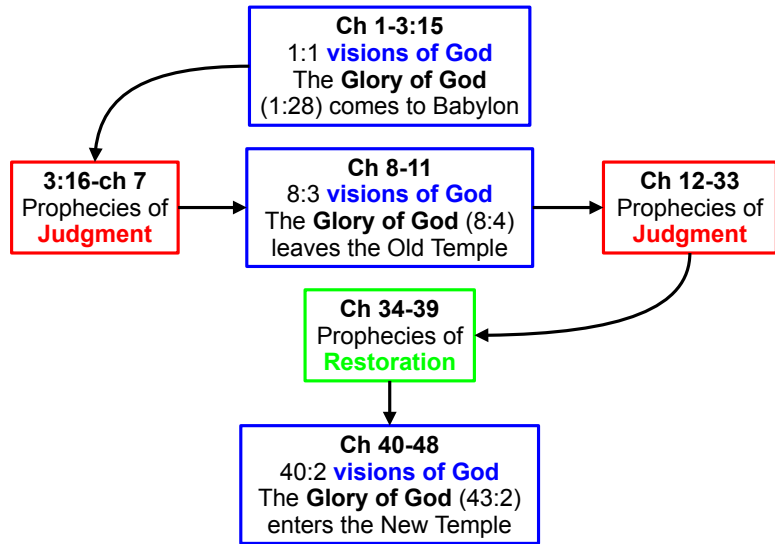


Figure 10: The Structure of Ezekiel

35 Only two instances of כבוד (out of 19 in the book) fall outside the visions: 39:21 (still referring to God’s glory) and 31:18 (in the lament over Pharaoh).

Revelation 6-8a, The Seven Seals

Ezek. 8:5 Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry. 6 He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, **that I should go far off from my sanctuary?**

Chapter 8 details many of these corrupt practices. The consequence of these idolatries is that the Lord will abandon his sanctuary.

In chapter 9, judgment begins. The Lord sends executioners, with a priestly scribe (chart).

Ezek 9:1 He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. 2 And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar.

Next, we learn that the glory of the Lord, originally in the temple in 8:4, has left “the cherub” on the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies,³⁶ to the threshold of the temple, preparing to depart.

3a And the **glory of the God of Israel** was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house.

The scribe is called to mark those who mourn over the abominations, anticipating the marking of the 144,000 Israelites in Revelation 7:

3b And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; 4 And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and **set a mark upon the foreheads** of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

Then judgment falls on the rest:

5 And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: 6 Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary.

In chapter 10, the chariot of chapter 1 suddenly reappears, to the right side (the south) of the temple (Figure 11, chart):

Ezek. 10:1 Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne. ... 3 Now the cherubims stood on the right [south] side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court.

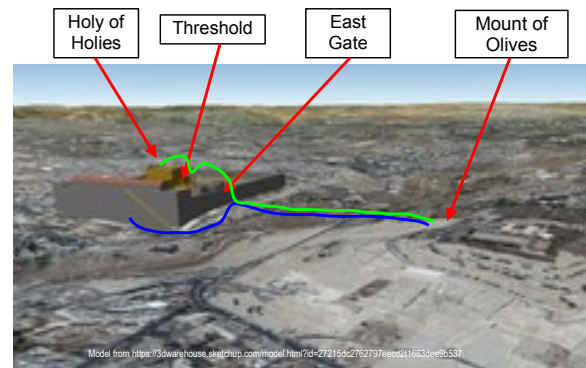


Figure 11: The Glory of the Lord (green) leaves the Temple on the chariot (blue)

36 See commentaries for discussion of the use of the singular, which forms a clear contrast with the plural describing those who carry the chariot. Leslie (p. 147) translates “cherub-structure,” suggesting that “the temple cherubim formed a single structure,” and discusses other options.

The glory of the Lord, last seen (9:3) at the door of the temple, now mounts the chariot, which rises into the air, standing over the east gate of the temple, and moves to the Mount of Olives, pausing there on its way to Babylon:

Ezek. 10:18 Then the **glory of the LORD** departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims. 19 And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: ... and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD'S house; and the **glory of the God of Israel** was over them above. ... 22 Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the **glory of the God of Israel** was over them above. 23 And the **glory of the LORD** went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.

In the midst of this account, after the chariot appears in 10:1 and before the glory of the Lord mounts it to ride away, we read the verse that lies behind Rev 8:5.

Ezek 10:2 And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and **fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city**. And he went in in my sight.

Ezekiel 1 described the fiery appearance of the chariot. Now it appears that there is an altar burning in its midst, from which coals can be retrieved. Because the temple is so defiled by idolatry, the glory of the Lord abandons it, and as it departs, coals of fire rain down in judgment on the temple and city.

Back in Revelation, the wickedness of the earth leads to God's withdrawing his gracious presence, and in response to the prayers of the martyrs, the fire of his wrath falls.

and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.—Each of the seventh actions ends with a common set of signs reflecting the appearance of God (chart). We saw most of these signs in the vision of the heavenly throne room in ch. 4:

Rev 4:5 And out of the throne proceeded **lightnings** and **thunderings** and **voices**: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

That in turn is an echo of God's appearance at Mt. Sinai,

Exo 19:16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were **thunders** and **lightnings**, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the **trumpet** exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. ... 18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount **quaked greatly**. 19 And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a **voice**.

This refrain, the strongest point of similarity across the three seventh elements, takes us back to the sixth seal, with its "great earthquake" (6:12) and the overwhelming terror of earth's residents (6:15), reinforcing the insight that what we see in the seventh seal is the heavenly action that sets loose the judgments viewed on earth in the sixth seal. As in the other seventh elements, we have reached the culmination of history, the final appearance of God to reign personally on earth.

In the trumpets and bowls, we will zoom in and learn in more detail what happens as we get closer to the end.

Notes

The Seals and the Scroll

Commentators differ on the relation between ch. 6 and the contents of the scroll.

1. A minority view, that nothing can be read until all the seals are open, was held by Alford and Plummer; the most detailed exposition is Bauckham, followed by Osborne.
2. Most commentators (e.g., Swete) understand the scroll as being unrolled bit by bit, each successive segment describing the contents of the numbered judgment. But parallels with Matt 24 show that the contents of the first six seals are not in fact secret. Aune disagrees with Bauckham's detailed analysis. Aune cites :Swete, 75 [but this is not clear]; Beckwith, 263–64; Bornkamm, ZNW 36 [1937] 132–49; Jeremias, TDNT 4:872 n.250 [??? this is just advocating a parallel interpretation of the three series of seven]; Strobel, “Apokalypse,” TRE 3:178–79.”
3. Gundry tries to combine the views. The scroll, in his view, can't be read till all seven seals, which secure the exposed edge of the papyrus, are broken. Yet with each seal events take place despite this unreadability. “So the scroll is likely to contain descriptions of the events that take place when the seals are broken one by one. It will turn out that those events will constitute a gradual taking control of the earth away from those who persecute Christians living there, this in answer to the Christians' prayers. We should therefore think of the scroll as a title deed to the earth.”

The “Little Book” of Revelation 10

The chapter refers four times to a book (10:2, 8, 9, 10), which in the KJV is called a “little book” (TR βιβλαρίδιον G974). But the textual evidence is highly variable, and the MT reads simply βιβλίον G975 in 10:2, 10, while critical editions favor this reading in 10:8. Thus regardless of textual preference, the two terms appear to be interchangeable. Bauckham offers evidence that the distinctive force of the diminutive is largely lost at this period.

The 4-3 Pattern in the Revelation

The seals are clearly divided into four (announced by the four living creatures), followed by three. In the bowls, this pattern is marked by four plagues directed toward nature (earth, sea, waters, and sun), before moving on to personal villains. Thus Moffat, though he also notes that the first three are directed εἰς, and the last four ἐπὶ, their targets. Farrer argues that the seven letters to the churches are also 4-3, based on the order of the figures used to introduce the Lord, compared with ch. 1. I suggested a 3-4 division there, based on the point at which the order of the two closing phrases changes (he that hath an ear, to him that overcometh), but the 4-3 pattern elsewhere might suggest reconsidering there.

Come and See (6:1, 3, 5, 7)

The text of these invitations is confused concerning the second imperative. In MT, “see” is lacking in 6:3, while NA28 omits it in all four, and TR sometimes replaces ἴδε with βλέπε. The

presence of the invitation “see” shows that the command is addressed to John, while its omission opens the possibility that the command is to the horsemen.³⁷ But if it was present in none of the invitations, how did it enter? Leveling the omission of the second imperative (NA28) seems as arbitrary as leveling its presence (TR). Likely, it was present in some of the invitations, and the parallel with at least the third “come” in 22:17 that the second imperative warrants is very much in keeping with John’s style of resumption. (The first two imperatives in 22:17 may be addressed to the Lord, in response to his promise in 22:12, “Behold, I come quickly.” Or, like the third, they may be what the Spirit and the believers announce to unbelievers, inviting them to join with them in waiting for the Lord.)

Four Judgments, or Three?

Ezek 14:21 clearly summarizes the four judgments of Leviticus 26. Ezekiel’s contemporary Jeremiah repeatedly (Jer. 14:12; 21:7, 9; 24:10; 27:8, 13; 29:17–18; 32:24, 36; 34:17; 38:2; 42:17, 22; 44:13) references the first three of the classic judgments (sword, famine, pestilence) in describing the coming fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar, without including beasts, consistently with reference to the conditions within the city during the siege:

Jer. 21:9 He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey.

He mentions beasts only in separate verses (Jer. 7:33; 12:4, 9; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; 27:6; 28:14; 34:20; 50:39), as eating dead bodies, not as an active threat to the living. Interestingly, Jer 15:3 has a different foursome: sword, dogs, fowls, and beasts. While Ezekiel is clearly referring to the same Babylonian conquest as Jeremiah, perhaps he is seeing beyond to the final conquest, when the satanic beasts become prominent. (Antichrist makes no sense before the coming of the true Christ.)

Loud Noises in the Revelation

Several kinds of loud noises are mentioned, often in distinctive combinations. Whom do they represent?

Here are the individual words, with instances in the Revelation and in the whole NT.

- βροντή G1027 thunder 10/12 instances in the NT
- ἀστραπή G796 lightning 4/9
- φωνή G5456 voice, noise 53/139 (φωνή μέγας 18/37)
- σεισμός G4578 earthquake 6/13
- ὕδωρ G5204 (πολύς G4183) 3/4 (in Revelation always preceded by φωνή)

Big Four

The first four appear together in the last seal, the last trumpet, and the last bowl,

Rev. 8:5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were **voices**, and **thunderings**, and **lightnings**, and an **earthquake**.

³⁷ Thus D.E. Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb*: the horsemen are “summoned by God’s attendants to wreak havoc on his enemies” (Kindle Locations 1300-1301). Thus also Thomas, Moffat (though he allows a subsequent summons to John to “see”), Mounce, Beale, Osborne, Beasley-Murray, Swete, Patterson, Alford.

Rev. 11:19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were **lightnings**, and **voices**, and **thunderings**, and an **earthquake**, and great hail.

Rev. 16:18 And there were **voices**, and **thunders**, and **lightnings**; and there was a great **earthquake**, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

The triplet “lightening, thundering, voices” appears one other time, in the vision of the throne:

Rev. 4:5 And out of the throne proceeded **lightnings** and **thunderings** and **voices**: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

An earthquake would not fit here, since the scene is heaven, not earth.

The four elements together recall God’s appearance on Sinai,

Exo 19:16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were **thunders** [Heb קול H6963 voice, thus LXX] and **lightnings**, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the **voice** of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. . . .
18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount **quaked** greatly.

Thunder

Where else do we see thunder in the Revelation, and whom does it represent?

6:1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise φωνή of **thunder**, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. *Clearly identified as the voice of the living creature.*

10:3 And [the mighty angel] cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven **thunders** uttered their voices. 4 And when the seven **thunders** had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven **thunders** uttered, and write them not. *It would be consistent with the trumpets and the bowls if the thunders were angelic beings*

14:2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of **many waters**, and as the voice of a great **thunder**: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: *I’ll suggest that the “many waters” are the voice of the Lord, the thunder is the voice of the angels, and the harpers are the elders.*

19:6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of **many waters**, and as the voice of mighty **thunderings**, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. *We have the same three categories as in 14:2, but how can the Lord (“many waters”) praise the Lord God Omnipotent? From 1:15, this is the voice in which the Lord Jesus first spoke to John. He may now join in the praise of his creatures to the Father.*

Recall how people explained the heavenly voice in John 12:

John 12:28 Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. 29 The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it **thundered**: others said, **An angel spake** to him.

Many Waters

The last two references in Revelation to thunder also mention the voice of many waters, which appears one other place by itself:

Rev. 1:15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the **sound of many waters**.

The “voice of many waters” appears 2x in the LXX, where it is a divine characteristic:

Psa. 93:4 The LORD on high is mightier than the **noise of many waters**, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.

Ezek. 1:24 And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the **noise of great waters**, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings.

The Hebrew expression here is קול מים רבים, which also appears here:

Ezek. 43:2 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a **noise of many waters**: and the earth shined with his glory.

Loud Voice 18x

An Angel 8x

Rev. 5:2 And I saw a **strong angel** proclaiming with a **loud voice**, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

Rev. 7:2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

Rev. 8:13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

Rev. 10:1 And I saw another **mighty angel** come down from heaven, ... 3 And cried with a **loud voice**, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

Rev. 14:6 And I saw another **angel** fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, 7 Saying with a **loud voice**, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

Rev. 14:9 And the third **angel** followed them, saying with a **loud voice**, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, ...

Rev. 14:15 And another **angel** came out of the temple, crying with a **loud voice** to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

Rev. 19:17 And I saw an **angel** standing in the sun; and he cried with a **loud voice**, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

Heavenly Host (Living Creatures, Angels, Elders) 2x

Rev. 5:11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many **angels** round about the throne and the **beasts** and the **elders**: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 Saying with a **loud voice**, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

Rev. 11:15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were **great voices in heaven**, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

Believers in Heaven 3x

Rev. 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of **them that were slain** for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a **loud voice**, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

Rev. 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, **a great multitude**, which no man could number, of all **nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues**, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 And cried with a **loud voice**, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Rev. 19:1 And after these things I heard **a great voice of much people in heaven**, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

Single Loud Voice from Heaven 5x

Probably the Lord Jesus

Rev. 11:12 And they heard a **great voice** from **ἐκ** heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. *comparison with 4:1 suggests that this is the Lord Jesus; there it was a voice like a trumpet*

Rev. 16:1 And I heard **a great voice out of the temple** saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. *Coming from inside the temple, probably the voice of God, or better, the Lamb, unleashing the judgments of the sealed book*

Rev. 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.

Uncertain

Rev. 12:10 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.

Rev. 21:3 And I heard a **great voice out of ἐκ heaven** saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Vocabulary for “Beast” (Table 18)

Does God have a Bow?

The rider of the white horse in 6:2 carries a bow. The Lord’s usual weapon is a sword, but there are a few places in the OT where he is associated with a bow.

The most common is the rainbow, but as a promise *not* to judge, this has very different

semantics from the context in Revelation 6. In fact, the common understanding of the rainbow as an image of a warrior who has hung up his bow would suggest that the person on the white horse is *not* the Lord. But this may be reading too much into the image, as these examples suggest:

Psa. 7:11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. 12 If he turn not, he will whet his sword; **he hath bent his bow**, and made it ready. 13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his **arrows** against the persecutors.

Zech. 9:12 Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee; 13 **When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim**, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. 14 And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.

Lam 2:2 The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied: ... 4 He hath bent **his bow** like an enemy:

Lam 3:12 He hath bent **his bow**, and set me as a mark for the arrow. 13 He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins.

Hab. 3:8 Was Jehovah displeased with the rivers? Was thine anger against the rivers, Or thy wrath against the sea, That thou didst ride upon thy horses, Upon thy chariots of salvation? 9 **Thy bow was made quite bare**;

Prices in the Third Seal

Charles (1.125) cites Cicero, In Verrem 3.81, 84, as evidence that these prices are eight to twelve times higher than usual. The closest I can find in Perseus

(<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0018%3Atext%3DVer.%3Aactio%3D2%3Abook%3D3%3Asection%3D75>) is (Perseus ref.) Cic. Ver. 2.3.75ff, Yonge’s translation, but with this note:

Orellius [von Orelli, 1787-1849] considers that all the figures and measures in this and the next chapter are in a state of hopeless corruption and confusion; and they are certainly not very easily reconciled with each other.

So it may be best not to place too much confidence in Charles’s argument. The comparison with 2 Kings 7 is more in keeping with John’s reliance on OT imagery.

	n היה	בהמה	v היה	Total
θηρίον	70	10		141
ζώον	12	0	2	38
κτῆνος	1	155		259
ζωή			17	282
Total	96	190	287	

Table 18: Vocabulary for "Beast" in the OT and NT

But the prices still seem high. In 2 Kings 7, a seah (about 12 liters) of wheat flour sells for a shekel (about 10 grams [of silver]). The denarius is about 5 grams, and the “measure” (choenix) is about a liter (data from Anchor Bible Dictionary, Weights and Measures). So the wheat in Revelation is about six times more costly than in Samaria, while the barley (three measures instead of two) about four times more costly. So the *tenor* of the voice from the throne, based on the prophetic parallel from 2 Kings 7, is a divine assurance of restraint, reinforced by the protection of the wine and oil, but the actual *price* is still oppressive, in keeping with the nature of the judgment.

The Heavenly Sanctuary in the Revelation

The book contains numerous references to the tabernacle or tabernacle and its furniture. David Gooding has a series of lectures on this subject and some written notes:

<https://www.myrtlefieldhouse.com/revelation>.

Numerous of these references appear in the culminating visions of the first two series: 8:1-5; 11:15-19; and the start of the third, ch. 15 (references in **bold red** below)

Temple

If we accept the late dating of the book, the physical temple has already been destroyed, and the term “temple” must refer either to the heavenly sanctuary or to the spiritual sanctuary that incorporates believers as living stones (2 Cor 6:16 ye are the temple of the living God). The reference to the temple in 11:1-2 is anomalous.

Heavenly Sanctuary

There are numerous references to a temple of God that is in heaven. This is where the throne is, 7:15; 16:17. Recall the temple imagery in Revelation 4: the sea of glass, the seven lamps, the angelic praise echoed from Isaiah 6. But it is also called the temple of the tabernacle, 15:5.

Rev. 7:15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his **temple**: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

Rev. 11:19 And the **temple** of God was opened **in heaven**, and there was seen in his **temple** the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Rev. 14:15 And another angel came out of the **temple**, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

Rev. 14:17 And another angel came out of **the temple which is in heaven**, he also having a sharp sickle.

Rev. 15:5 And after that I looked, and, behold, **the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened**:

Rev. 15:6 And the seven angels came out of **the temple**, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

Rev. 15:8 And **the temple was filled with smoke** from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the **temple**, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

Rev. 16:1 And I heard a great voice out of **the temple** saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

Rev. 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.

Spiritual Sanctuary

Rev. 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make **a pillar in the temple of my God**, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

Rev. 21:22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

Chapter 11

Rev. 11:1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure **the temple of God**, and the altar, and them that worship therein. 2 But the court which is without **the temple** leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

Tabernacle

There are three references to the tabernacle as an entity in itself:

Rev. 13:6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and **his tabernacle**, and them that dwell in heaven.

Rev. 15:5 And after that I looked, and, behold, **the temple of the tabernacle** of the testimony in heaven was opened:

Rev. 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, **the tabernacle of God is with men**, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Sea

In 1 Kings, the word θάλασσα G2281 (ים H3220) describes the laver in Solomon's temple (in the tabernacle, the word is λουτήρ, translating כִּיּוֹר H3595, not used in the NT). Thus its presence in the throne room may reflect this article of furniture, made here of glass rather than brass:

Rev. 4:6 And before the throne there was a **sea of glass** like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

Rev. 15:2 And I saw as it were a **sea of glass** mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the **sea of glass**, having the harps of God.

Altar

In heaven, with the possible exception of 11:1 (but if this is after AD 70, what earthly altar could there be?)

Rev. 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw **under the altar** the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

Rev. 8:3 And another angel came and stood at the **altar**, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

Rev. 8:5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the **altar**, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

Rev. 9:13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden **altar** which is before God,

Rev. 11:1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the **altar**, and them that worship therein.

Rev. 14:18 And another angel came out from the **altar**, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

Rev. 16:7 And I heard another out of the **altar** say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

Ark

Rev. 11:19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the **ark** of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Blood Under the Altar (6:9-11)

The most common references to blood at the bottom of the altar (Lev 4-5) deal with sin offerings, but we surely are not to understand the martyrs as functioning in this role. Any blood shed from a sacrifice, even peace offerings destined for consumption by the worshipper, was to be poured upon the earth: Lev 17:13; Deu 12:16, 24; 15:23.

Hebrew Sources for θυσία G2378

What OT sacrifices does this describe? Table 19 shows that it is not restricted to slain offerings—that exclusive slot is taken by θύμα. Rather, it describes meal offerings and slain offerings indiscriminately.

	מנחה	זבח	קרבן	Total
θυσία	149	136	0	386
δῶρον	28	0	76	170
θύμα	0	9	0	15
Total	213	162	80	

Table 19: Vocabulary for Sacrifice

The Great Earthquake

Four, possibly five, references:

Revelation 6-8a, The Seven Seals

Rev. 6:12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;
sixth seal

Rev. 8:5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. *seventh seal*

Rev. 11:13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. *end of interlude*

Rev. 11:19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, [and an earthquake,] and great hail. *textual variation; seventh trumpet*

Rev. 16:18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. . . . 21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: *seventh bowl*

Three of these (8:5;11:19; 16:18) mark the seventh element of each series, accompanied by voices, thunderings, and lightnings. The other two occur without the adornments, just before the seventh seal and seventh trumpet.

The Throne and the Lamb

A possible OT anticipation of the refusal of the kings is in Isaiah's oracle against Moab, a chiasm centered on an invitation to salvation in 16:1-5:

Isa 16:1 Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela to the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of Zion.

Moab, a perpetual rival of Israel, was descended from Lot by one of his daughters and developed a kingdom east of the Dead Sea. David subdued them:

2Sa 8:2 And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts.

These gifts consisted of thousands of lambs:

2Ki 3:4 And Mesha king of Moab was a sheepmaster, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool.

Around 850 BC, they rebelled against Jewish rule:

2Ki 3:5 But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

Now Isaiah, writing about 700 BC, predicts Moab's doom.³⁸ He reports first Moab's mourning:

Isa 15:1 The burden of Moab.

Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, and brought to silence;
because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, and brought to silence; . . .

38 The passage is chiasmic, with 16:1-5 at the center: <https://cyber-chapel.org/sermons/isaiah/notes/Isaiah1516.pdf>.

3 In their streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth:
on the tops of their houses, and in their streets, every one shall howl, weeping abundantly.

Then the voice changes to the first person:

Isa 15:5 **My** heart shall cry out for Moab;
his fugitives shall flee unto Zoar,
9 For the waters of Dimon shall be full of blood:
for **I** will bring more upon Dimon,
lions upon him that escapeth of Moab,
and upon the remnant of the land.

Strikingly, the one who is bringing judgment is also weeping. Judgment is truly God's strange work (Isa 28:21), who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Eze 33:11).

Then comes the amazing invitation:

Isa 16:1 Send ye **the lamb** to the ruler of the land
from Sela to the wilderness,
unto the mount of the daughter of Zion. ...
5 And in mercy shall the throne be established:
and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David,
judging, and seeking judgment, and hastening righteousness.

Mesha sent 100,000 lambs to the kings of Israel, but the Lord requires only one, the lamb led to the slaughter in Isaiah 53, bearing the iniquity of his people.

Sadly, Moab rejects this gracious invitation:

Isa 16:6 We have heard of the pride of Moab; he is very proud:
even of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath:
but his lies shall not be so.

And the chapter closes as the Lord, still weeping for Moab (v. 9), brings judgment upon them.

The Sealing of God's People

What is the purpose of the sealing in 7:3-4? These are the only ones said to be *sealed* in the Revelation. Other believers have God's name *written* upon them. In the culture of the first century, the two are different: one is done by impression of an engraved physical object (like a signet ring), the other with a pen.

Rev 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and **I will write upon him the name of my God**, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

And this writing is indeed in the forehead:

Rev 22:4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

The 144,000 of ch. 14 have this written name; if they are the same as those of ch. 7, they would bear both the written name and the seal.

Rev 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name **written** in their foreheads.

But the sealing of people only appears later in connection with the locust demons of the fifth trumpet:

Rev. 9:4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not **the seal of God in their foreheads**.

The *writing* of the name recalls the destroyers of Ezekiel 9, in which a scribe writes (not seals!) God’s faithful:

Eze 9:3 And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the **writer's inkhorn** by his side; 4 And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and **set a mark σημεῖον** G4592 upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

Ezekiel uses “put a mark,” תוה תו, δίδωμι σημεῖων, rather than “write,” but it is done by an agent with a writer’s inkhorn קסם הספר (LXX diverges, referring to a girdle on his loins). This language of marking appears to anticipate the mark given by Antichrist to his followers:

Rev 13:16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a **mark χάραγμα** G5480 in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the **mark**, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

NB: χάραγμα G5480 does not appear in the LXX, and σημεῖον G4592 in the Revelation always has the sense of a miracle (as mostly in the LXX, translated by אות, Table 20). It seems likely that marking in the NT reflects the kind of action seen in Ezekiel 9. All three instances of תו that are translated σημεῖον are in Ezek 9:4, 6. The other three are two instances in Ketiv-Qere in 1 Sam 21:14 when David “scrabbled” on the door of the gate of Gath to feign insanity, and Job 31:35, where the meaning is disputed: see HALOT.

	תו, תוה-1	אות	נס	חותם, חתם, חתמת	Total
σημεῖον	3	75	9		116
σφραγ*				28	52
Total	6	79	21	43	

Table 20: Vocabulary for signs and sealing

Some commentators link the sealing in 7:3-4 with Paul’s metaphor of the Holy Spirit as the seal placed on believers:

2Co 1:22 Who hath also **sealed** us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Eph 1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were **sealed** with that holy Spirit of promise,

Eph 4:30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are **sealed** unto the day of redemption.

But even Paul uses the metaphor in other ways:

1Co 9:2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the **seal** of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

2Ti 2:19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this **seal**, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

If even Paul does not use the term in a single technical sense, it would seem arbitrary to insist that John restricts it to one of Paul's senses.

The List of Tribes in Rev 7:5-8

It is often insisted that this list of tribes is so different from other lists that it must be understood symbolically, of the people of God. Table 21 summarizes numerous lists of tribes³⁹ with which we can test this claim.

Some features that have been adduced as distinctive of Revelation 7 are found elsewhere:

It lacks Dan, but so does the detailed genealogy of the tribes in 1 Chr 2-7.

It starts with Judah. Mounce observes: "... Judah rather than Reuben (Jacob's oldest son) heads the list. The reason for this change is obvious.

Christ belonged to the tribe of Judah (Heb 7:14; cf. Gen 49:10). Giving this priority to Judah would be perfectly natural for a Christian writer." But in fact the change seemed natural for the Jewish writers of Num 2, 67, 10, 34, 1 Chr 2-7, 12.

We can compare these lists with each other in various ways. Consider two options.

Label	Reference	Description
Gen29	Gen 29-35	Account of the births of Jacob's sons
Gen35	Gen 35:22-26	Summary of Jacob's sons
Gen46	Gen 46:8-27	Census of the tribes entering Egypt
Gen49	Gen 49	Jacob's blessing on his sons
Exo1	Exodus 1:1-4	The tribes that came into Egypt
Num1a	Num 1:1-15	Princes that supervised the first census
Num1b	Num 1:20-42	Results of the first census
Num2	Num 2	Order of encampment
Num7	Num 7	Tribal offerings to the tabernacle
Num10	Num 10	Order of march
Num13	Num 13	List of spies
Num26	Num 26	Results of the second census
Num34	Num 34:19-28	Elders supervising the division of the land
Deu27	Deut 27:12-13	Order of the tribes on Gerizim and Ebal
Deu33	Deut 33	Moses' blessing on the tribes
Jos13	Josh 13ff	Tribal allocations
Jos21	Josh 21:4-8	Hosts of Levitical cities
Jud5	Judg 5	Deborah's list of tribes
Ezk48a	Ezek 48:1-29	Eschatological tribal allocations
Ezk48b	Ezek 48:31-34	Gates of the eschatological city
1C2a	1 Chr 2:1-2	Summary of the sons of Israel
1C3b	1 Chr 2:3-7:40	Children of the sons of Israel
1C12	1 Chr 12:24-37	Tribes backing David
1C28	1 Chr 27:16-22	Princes of the tribes
Rev7	Rev 7	The 144,000 sealed

Table 21: Tribal Lists in the Bible

39 Sources: Bennett, W. H. (1911–1912). TRIBE. In J. Hastings, J. A. Selbie, A. B. Davidson, S. R. Driver, & H. B. Swete (Eds.), A Dictionary of the Bible: Dealing with Its Language, Literature, and Contents Including the Biblical Theology (Vol. 4, p. 811). Charles Scribner's Sons; T. & T. Clark.; Felix Just, "The Twelve Tribes of Israel." http://www.calvaryflathead.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/The_Twelve_Tribes_of_Israel.pdf

The item similarity is the number of items shared by the two lists, divided by the total number of items in both lists. This value is 1 if the lists are identical and 0 if they share no items. We can convert item similarity to a distance measure by subtracting it from 1. Figure 4 shows the lists arranged⁴⁰ so that the spatial distance between two lists corresponds to their distance from one another using this count metric. By this metric, Revelation 7 is completely unexceptional, compared with Judges 5, which undoubtedly refers to the historical nation. Even the second list in 1 Chronicles 2, and that in 1 Chronicles 27, are more distinct than it is. It is the closest list of all to the cluster of Gen 35 ,46, 49, Deut 27, Ezek 48b, and 1 Chr 2a.

The count distance ignores changes in the order of the tribes. We can capture this with the edit distance, the minimum number of insertions, removals, or substitutions in one list that is needed to make it the same as the other.⁴¹ Figure 5 shows the resulting arrangement. By this measure, Revelation 7 is closer to the other lists than are the lists of Ezek 48a, Numbers 2, 7, and 10. Ezekiel 48 is eschatological and might be argued to be figurative, but the lists in Numbers are without question describing the nation Israel.

Ethnic Descriptors (Table 22)

Robes στολή in the Revelation

The martyrs of 6:11 and the multitude of 7:9ff are distinguished from other white-garbed individuals in that their garments are characterized as στολαί

	הַפְּשָׁמָה	מִטָּה	שִׁבְט	לְשׁוֹן	שָׁפָה	עַם	גּוֹי	Total
φυλή	38	172	122	0	0	0	0	410
γλώσσα	0	0	0	88	5	0	0	160
λαός	0	0	0	0	0	1582	12	1968
ἔθνος	0	0	0	0	0	134	494	992
ἄνθρωπος	183	0	1	0	0	3	0	208
Total	304	252	190	117	178	1868	560	

Table 22: Ethnic Descriptors in Hebrew and Greek

G4749. Elsewhere in the NT, this word describes the garment given to the prodigal son (Lk 15:22), or proudly worn by the scribes (Lk 20:46), as well as the garb of the angel at the tomb (Mark 16:5).

Does it mark a special honor given to martyrs, above other of the Lord’s servants? 7:14 rather suggests that everyone had robes, but these became white, not through their own blood, but by the blood of the lamb. In the LXX, Joseph upon release from prison is said to *change ἀλλάσσω* G236 his στολή, suggesting that his prison garb also qualified for this description. So Jacob tells his family to change their garments (Gen 35:2), and Evilmerodach changes the prison garments of Jehoiachin (Jer 52:33). The LXX usage makes the term seem more pedestrian.

The LXX does use the term for the vestments of the priests (Ex 28-29).

The word describes the clothing that Samson took from those he slew in Ashkelon (Judg 14:19).

40 Using a technique known as “multidimensional scaling,” in particular the manifold.mds() method defined in the Python sklearn package. <https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/rev2/notes/TribalLists.zip> contains a csv file with the lists in Table 21 and the Jupyter python notebook used to do the analyses presented here.

41 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edit_distance, sometimes called the Levenshtein distance after its originator, V. I. Levenshtein. Binary codes capable of correcting deletions, insertions, and reversals. Soviet Physics Doklady, 10(8):707-710, 1966.

Perhaps the point in the Revelation lies more in the color of the garment than in its structure.

Verbs for Knowing (7:14; Ezek 37:3; Table 23)

ἐπίσταμαι and οἶδα are about equally dedicated to $\epsilon\pi\tau$ (64%), but the latter is much more common overall, and would come more naturally to mind. γινώσκω is even more dedicated (74%), but its emphasis on coming to know by experience would not be appropriate here. In both cases, the questioner is asking someone whom he expects to have immediate knowledge.

	עִד	הִרָה		Total
ἐπίσταμαι	38	0		59
οἶδα	181	4		285
γινώσκω	508	6		690
Total	951	1310		

Table 23: Verbs for Knowing

Who does the Washing (7:14; 19:8)?

7:14 presents the saints as the agents of washing $\pi\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\nu\omega$ G4150 their own clothes in preparation for meeting the Lord, just as Israel did when they were summoned to meet the Lord on Mount Sinai:

Exo 19:10 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and **let them wash $\pi\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\nu\omega$ their clothes**, 11 And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

This agency of the saints is consistent with the later statement that the whiteness of our clothing represents our righteous actions:

Rev 19:8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for **the fine linen is the righteousness of saints**.

But at the very outset, we are told that it is the Lord who has washed $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\omega$ G3068 us:

Rev 1:5 Unto him that loved us, and **washed** us from our sins in his own blood,

The change in verbs is significant (Trench §xlv). $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\omega$ refers to washing the body in its entirety (we might say “bathe”), while $\pi\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\nu\omega$ is used only of washing things. So far, so good: the Lord is the agent in bathing us from our sins, while we (in the power of the Spirit) achieve the purifying of our conduct, represented by our clothing. Note that the white garments promised to the overcomers at Sardis (3:5) are dependent on their faithfulness. But the puzzle of 7:14 is that the washing of clothes appears to be done “in the blood of the Lamb.”

There may be a textual issue here. The majority mss are divided, but both Hodges-Farstad and Robinson-Pierpont omit the explicit object after $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\kappa\alpha\nu\alpha\nu$. Some instances of the verb in the LXX do not take an explicit object (e.g., Lev 13:19; Isa 1:18). Perhaps we are to read 7:14,

- they have washed their garments (by their faithfulness and by overcoming)
- and they themselves are white (by the blood of the Lamb).

But this is too tentative for the mainline exposition.

If we do translate “made [their garments] white in the blood of the lamb,” in what sense is that true? Not “by means of”—that would be $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}$ with genitive (not accusative as in 12:11—that requires further study). $\epsilon\nu\ \tau\tilde{\omega}\ \acute{\alpha}\iota\mu\alpha\tau\iota$ appears 3x in the Revelation: here and in 1:5 and 5:9,

Rev. 1:5 Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins **in his own blood**,

Rev. 5:9 thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God **by thy blood** out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

Certainly 5:9, and plausibly 1:5 as well, have an instrumental sense. Perhaps it is to be taken with the sense of Hebrew כּ as in Jouon-Muraoka §132e, who do understand the Hebrew preposition in some cases as “by means of.” Then our mind is drawn to Isaiah 64:6,

Is. 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

The attempts of the unredeemed at righteous actions are deemed, not white raiment, but filthy rags. Only those who are “in the blood of the Lamb,” or as Paul would say, “in Christ,” can make their garments white.

שכן H7931 vs. ישב H3427 (7:15 “dwell σκαηνόω among them”)

This may well be John’s attempt to capture the distinctive sense of שכן, which is regularly used in the OT promises that God would “dwell among his people” (Ex. 25:8; 29:45–46; Num. 35:34; 1 Kings 6:13; Psa. 68:18) and which has no consistent LXX equivalent (Table 24). John’s verb is a simpler form of κατασκαηνόω G2681, which he never uses; his verb (σκαηνόω G4637) appears only once in LXX, Gen 13:12.

	ישב	שכן	סכך	Total
κατοικέω	504	17	0	641
κατασκαηνόω	2	24	0	63
(επι)σκιάζω	0	3	6	23
οικέω	48	4	0	85
varied		56	10	
Total	1089	130	16	

Table 24: Verbs for dwelling

Who are “the seven angels”?

The article suggests that they are known to the readers. Gen 1:1 refers to “the heavens and the earth,” without any previous reference; the assumption is that everyone knows what they are. Several options have been suggested for “the seven angels.”

Because they stand before ἐνώπιον G1799 God, it is common to identify them with the seven angels of Tobit 12:15 and many other intertestamental Jewish writings,

Tob. 12:15 I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out **before ἐνώπιον** the glory of the Holy One.

However (Plummer, Pulpit Bible), if any angel is presenting the prayers of the saints in this passage, it is “another angel,” 8:3. And if they are indeed an expected part of the heavenly scene, why did they not appear in ch. 4-5? (Thomas)

These might be the seven angels associated with the seven churches in ch. 2-3:

Rev 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. **The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches:** and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14 and to the angel of the church at xxx ...

I explained these as human messengers sent from the churches to John on Patmos, who would carry his news back to them. This explanation seems more easily to accommodate the direct address to the angel of praise and rebukes for the church itself.

Wallace (p 220) recognizes a cataphoric article, referring to what immediately follows, as in 2 Cor 8:18 and in the common saying “faithful is the saying: xxx” (1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8). But in both the cases, the person or saying in question is treated as being known to the readers, and the text simply reminds them of it.

The construction “the X which Y” seems particularly susceptible to a cataphoric interpretation, without any assumption of previous knowledge.

- Matt 4:16 the people which sat in darkness
- Matt 11:21 the mighty works which were done in you
- Matt 15:27 the crumbs which fall

But then, John is sloppy in his use of the article: “the altar” in 6:9 has no earlier reference. It is simply prominent in his mind, the object naturally used in the action envisioned (Joüon-Muraoka §137m). Waltke §13.5.1e, p. 243 “nouns definite in the imagination,” GKC §126q-s, p. 406 “present to the mind under given circumstances,” Joüon-Muraoka §137m-o, pp. 478-479, §137n “a person who is mentioned in the course of narration in circumstances which give him/her a particular determination.” This seems the best explanation of “the seven angels.”

Greek and Hebrew Vocabulary for “Trumpet” (Table 25)

	שופר H7782	הצצרה H2689	Total
σάλπιγξ	39	28	95
Total	72	29	

Table 25: Words for "Trumpet"

The silver הצצרה H2689 is mostly a liturgical instrument, handled by the priests and Levites:

2Chr. 29:26 And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the **trumpets**.

The שופר "cornet" H7782 was a much more democratic instrument, accessible to anyone who dealt with sheep and goats.

Note:

1Chr. 13:8 And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with **trumpets**. *Did “all Israel” play trumpets? More likely, this reflects the participation of the Levites.*

The instruments were sometimes used together:

In war

Hos. 5:8 Blow ye the **cornet** in Gibeah, and the **trumpet** in Ramah: cry aloud at Bethaven, after thee, O Benjamin. *Ramah was Samuel’s home—is there a Levitical connection that would explain the presence of trumpets there?*

In worship:

Revelation 6-8a, The Seven Seals

Psa. 98:6 With **trumpets** and sound of **cornet** make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.

1Chr. 15:28 Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the **cornet**, and with **trumpets**, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps.

At renewal of the covenant under Asa:

2Chr. 15:14 And they swear unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with **trumpets**, and with **cornets**.

So what do the seven angels blow? The eschatological trumpet in the OT is typically the שופר:

Zeph. 1:14 The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. 15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 A day of the **trumpet שופר** and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

Jer. 4:19 My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the **trumpet שופר**, the alarm of war. 20 Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. Jer. 4:21 How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the **trumpet שופר**?

Jer. 6:1 O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the **trumpet שופר** in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Bethhaccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction.

This was what Israel blew to bring down Jericho. The signals blown by the seven angels are not notes of liturgical worship, but declarations of judgment, so the שופר would seem most appropriate.

In addition, the ram's horn first appears in the OT in Exod 19:16-19, which clearly lies behind 8:5.