

Bible Study # 96
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Book of Revelation Series—Revelation 7—10

As we continue along, we will go right into the book of Revelation this evening. We **are getting into Revelation 7, 8, 9 and 10 this evening.**

There are several things to understand in terms of a basic outline of the book of Revelation and what is involved. Chapter 6 gives us an outline of the first six seals of the book of Revelation. Then in chapter 8 we get into the seventh seal. There are seven seals to the book of Revelation that seal the whole book. Coming down, you have seven seals and then the seventh seal is comprised of seven trumpets. When the seventh seal is opened, seven trumpets begin to blow successively through that period of time. And then the seventh trumpet consists of seven last plagues. **We have that outline as we go through. You have the seven seals; the seventh seal is seven trumpets and the seventh trumpet is seven last plagues.** I am going to touch on some of these things in more depth on the Feast of Trumpets. I will comment more on other things here this evening.

I want to give you a little bit of a background. There are a couple of things to understand in regard to this. The first six seals are all listed in Revelation 6. That's a good way to remember them, by the way. Where are the first six seals? Well, Revelation 6. *The six seals go through: 1) the false prophets, 2) wars and rumors of war, 3) famines, 4) disease epidemics, 5) the Great Tribulation and 6) a great earthquake and heavenly signs.*

The heavenly signs set the stage for the Day of the Lord; **the seventh seal is the Day of the Lord.** The Day of the Lord is comprised of the seven trumpets. The trumpet plagues that are dispersed from them begin in Revelation 8.

The Great Tribulation is the fifth seal. From that we understand that the first four seals are all opened prior to the beginning of the Tribulation. *The Great Tribulation, we are told, consists of the last three and one-half years prior to the return of Christ.* It's defined in Scripture as time, times and a half time or 1,260 days or three and one-half years. It's the time that God's Church is to be protected in a place of safety. That's in Revelation 12, which we will get into next Bible study. This is our last Bible study until after the Feast.

There is a distinction that needs to be understood between the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. **The Great Tribulation, the fifth seal, is Satan's wrath.** Satan's wrath is poured out in two directions: it's poured out against God's people nationally and against God's people spiritually (God's true Church). God's people nationally are, of course, not only the Jews, but also the modern descendants of the so-called "lost ten tribes."

Approximately one-third of the Bible consists of prophecy. The most important key to unlocking and understanding Bible prophecy is the identity of Israel because if you don't know who and where Israel is, then you are in a fog. When you read prophecy in the Old Testament, you don't know who it's talking about. That is an important key. It is a doubly important key when you understand the responsibility of warning Israel that is outlined in the book of Ezekiel—the message of the watchman and all these things. It represents an important key to understanding Bible prophecy.

Jeremiah 30:7, we are told of the Tribulation, "Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's [Israel's] trouble, but he shall be saved out of it." That's why I say that the Tribulation is the wrath against physical Israel—the United States and British Commonwealth nations, in particular. It's the time of Jacob's trouble. We are told in Jeremiah, "that day is great, so that none is like it." Now, you can't have two times that are "great, so that nothing is like it." If something else is like it, then it doesn't stand out as unique. This is a unique period. It is a time of great trial and great tribulation. No time is comparable to it. When you go to the book of Matthew 24, it talks about the time of the Great Tribulation.

Matthew 24:21, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." Here's a unique period of time called the Great Tribulation. It surpasses every other time of adversity that has ever been known up until that time.

Jeremiah 30:7, we are told, "...For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble..." No day is like it. So we are talking about the same thing—the Great Tribulation.

In Revelation 12, we find that the Church is taken to a place of protection, a place of safety. Satan goes to make war with that portion of the Church left behind—the Laodiceans era. It is wrath directed at physical Israel and at spiritual

Israel. The prophecies of the Old Testament particularly relate to the national aspect of it.

This period of Tribulation—this time of intense pressure, adversity and all of the calamities that are associated with it—includes invasions, captivity and all the things that are prophesied in the books of Ezekiel, Isaiah and Jeremiah, as well as in the Minor Prophets. It includes all of these things. This is Satan's wrath.

What it amounts to is that God removes His protection. It's not God's wrath, but God removes His protection. You know, if we don't value what God gives us, God may say, 'You want to do it your way; go ahead and see how well you handle it.' Nationally, we have not really appreciated and valued God's blessing and God's protection.

The Laodiceans are not really stirred up and excited about the work of God. They don't have the burning zeal to really do the work that the Philadelphians are pictured as having. Rather, they are described in Revelation 3 as having sort of a compromising, lukewarm, little bit of a watered-down attitude. They don't have that zeal. That's what they are told they are lacking.

In Ezekiel 3 and 33, it talks about the watchman. The watchman is to go and deliver the message and be a watchman for the house of Israel. The watchman has the zeal to do the work to proclaim the message of God, to give the warning and the witness message that God has given. Philadelphians have the real zeal to go forth and to do that. In the book of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 9:4), it talks about those who sigh and cry for the abominations of Israel, those who are really bothered by what's going on. That zeal is there. That's one of the great contrasts.

We come down. The fifth seal is opened in Revelation 6. Then there comes a point where God steps in. **The sixth seal—the heavenly signs and earthquake—is the beginning of God's intervention.** These other events have been going on now for a period of time. The sixth seal sets the stage.

Revelation 6:17, "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" **The seventh seal is the Day of the Lord; the Day of the Lord is the day of God's wrath.** God gets ready to pour out His wrath, especially directed at the world that is under the full sway of Satan.

We note that Revelation 7 is an inset. If you are following the story flow, you come down through the sixth seal in Revelation 6. Then in Revelation 8:1 the seventh seal is opened. That is the sequence. Chapter 7 is a break into the sequence.

It seems very likely that what is termed "*Day of the Lord*" probably refers to the last year prior to Christ's return. We know that many times a day is used for a year in Bible prophecy. I am going to prove to you in a few moments that there are a number of months that are involved in this. There's a specific period of five months that's mentioned in the context of one of the trumpet plagues. When you look at the severity of them, it's unlikely that we could be looking at any sort of an extended period of time.

The Tribulation begins with the cessation of the sacrifices in Jerusalem. And, of course, they haven't started yet. They will start and they will be stopped. It doesn't say how long they will continue between the time they are initiated and the time they are stopped. But when they are stopped, we are told in the book of Daniel and other places that it will be the beginning of a period of 1,290 days. That is one month more than the 1,260 days that the Church is to be protected in a place of safety. We are looking at the onset of these things about three and one-half years before Christ returns. They continue on along for a two-and-one-half year period and the beast power is doing these things. But part way through the Tribulation (about two-thirds of the way through), God begins to step in. God begins to intervene. The heavenly signs are when He gets people's attention.

Then in chapter 7 He does something. Let's notice.

Revelation 7:1-3, "After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth... Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, 'Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.'" *The events of the Day of the Lord are held up for the completion of the sealing of the servants of God.*

Now, how are they sealed? What does that mean? With what are they sealed? If you get a legal document, what does a seal do? A seal authenticates genuineness. Sometimes you have to get a legal document notarized. The notary affixes his seal. The seal authenticates genuineness. That's the purpose of a seal. The seal that God places on His servants authenticates that they are the genuine thing.

Ephesians 1:13-14, "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed,

you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who [which] is the guarantee [KJV, “earnest”] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. God’s Spirit seals us. It authenticates us as the genuine article. It’s the earnest of our inheritance. You know what “earnest” is? If you have ever purchased a house, you frequently put down what’s called “earnest money.” That is a proof that you are going to come back. They, at that point, take the house off the market. You give them a certain portion; that’s earnest money. That means you are going to be back and fulfill the terms of the contract. You are going to come back at a designated time and complete the verbal agreement made with them. You are going to pay in full. You are going to finish what you have promised. This is the proof that you are going to come back and follow through with that promise.

When God gives us His Spirit at baptism, it is the earnest of our inheritance. You haven’t received the inheritance yet. When we’re baptized, we don’t suddenly become immortal to where we never die. You have the Spirit of God residing in you. In that sense, you have eternal life in you, but you have to endure to the end in order to be saved. That Spirit is the authentication of our genuineness. It is the earnest of our inheritance. We are told that we are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. God’s Spirit seals us as the real thing. It is the evidence that God is going to ultimately finish what He has started in us. When God gives you His Spirit, He starts a process.

Job 14:15, Job tells us, “...You shall desire the work of Your hands.” Job understood that God was going to have a desire to finish what He had started in you. There are other scriptures in the New Testament that talk about God bringing to completion the work that He has started in our lives (Philippians 1:6).

Revelation 7:4, “And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed.”

This sealing of the 144,000—the Holy Spirit is what seals God’s people.

We read an analogy that is given in Ezekiel 9 of the writer’s inkhorn.

Ezekiel 9:4-5, “and the Lord said to him, ‘Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.’ To the

others He said in my hearing, ‘Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, or have any pity.’” Everyone is going to be subject to this.

Verse 6, “...but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary...” They begin right there. It talks about being set aside. It talks about God’s people being sealed in that way.

One thing to understand is the fact that the greatest harvest of our work is yet in the future. There are people who have listened to the broadcast and read the magazines or booklets for years. They have heard all these things and somehow it doesn’t seem that important. They have either filed it away or said, ‘that may happen some day; it doesn’t really pertain to me’ or whatever they have done. But I am going to tell you what—when these events begin to happen (some of them have begun to happen) and when the reality of the Tribulation is here, it’s going to be a little late to be arguing about some of these things that maybe some have argued about.

When the events that are prophesied really begin to fully come about, you’re going to have people who are going to come to repentance during that period of Tribulation. Some of them are going to be martyred and others are going to survive through it. But there are going to be individuals who really begin to repent and their whole attitude changes. Instead of wanting to strive, argue about “the way I see it” and all this sort of thing, that is not going to be their attitude. When the troops are marching down the streets, it’s going to be a little late to argue about the Greek and the Hebrew. The Tribulation is going to be here. Individuals who have sort of played around with the truth, in many cases, are going to wake up at that point because the reality is going to be there.

Revelation 7:3, we find that they are told to wait, hold up, until we seal the servants of our God. There is a sealing that is completed. If you check this, it doesn’t necessarily have to mean that none of the 144,000 have been sealed prior to this time. There are two different ways of reading the term for “seal.” Either the whole 144,000 are sealed at this point or the final group that comprise the 144,000 (those that bring it up to the full contingent) are sealed at that time. In other words, this sealing marks the completion of sealing those who will comprise the 144,000. I think the clearest understanding of it is that the last of those who will be a part of that group will be sealed at this time.

God has selected this number for certain reasons. There are 12,000 who are assigned for each one of the tribes of Israel. You have this assignment that goes on down (Revelation 7:5-8). Twelve is the number of organized beginnings. Twelve is an organizational number that is used throughout Scripture, so here is something that is going to play an important part in God's government.

Revelation 7:9, "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number...." When you say, 'no man could number,' what does that mean? Does that mean nobody can count that high? Well, no. You can count up into the millions and billions. We've been able to number the people of the United States in terms of population. When it says, "a great multitude which no one can number," it is simply talking about a large crowd of undetermined or undefined number that no man could number, in the sense that no man was permitted to number. No man was allowed to number it. It was a large crowd. God has a specific designation, this 144,000. But, in addition, there is a multitude (a large crowd or group) that comes out.

Verse 9, continuing, "...of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes...." We see them here as well.

Verse 11, we see the angels here, "And all the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God."

Verse 13, "Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?'"

Verse 14, "And I said to him, 'Sir, you know' [John says, 'Well, I'm not sure; I'm sure you know.']. So he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

We find a number of people who are defined as having repented during the Tribulation—in many cases, having been martyred. The great harvest of this work is yet future. The time setting on this is important.

Many years ago in the early part of this century, the Jehovah's Witnesses locked in on the 144,000 in this verse and decided they were the 144,000, which presented a problem to them when their membership got larger than 144,000. I think there are over a million of them now. They obviously can't all be the 144,000. The sealing did not take place in 1914 or 1918. The sealing that is described here is to take place in

the future. The heavenly signs have not yet occurred; the Tribulation has not occurred yet. We are looking at an event that is yet future, an event that will occur.

The reason this is set apart is that God, at this point, is getting ready to pour out His wrath on unrepentant mankind. God will protect those who have really learned their lesson and come to repentance through the Tribulation. God will protect them from His wrath that is poured out. The Philadelphian Church is in a place of protection, geographically, where they have been protected through the Tribulation, which is continuing. Now, God is getting ready to step in and pour out His wrath. God is going to protect those who have really learned their lesson and come to deep repentance from the consequences of what He is going to pour out.

Revelation 8:1-4, "When He opened the **seventh seal**, and there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. And he was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand." – God's people praying to Him.

Incense was used in the tabernacle. The smoke of the incense is symbolic of the ascending prayers of the saints. We symbolically have pictured the prayers of God's people for God's intervention, deliverance and judgment all the way down through the centuries. Up until this point, God has not stepped in and answered those prayers. Collectively, those prayers are preserved. Now they are offered up. It's now time. It's time for those prayers to be answered.

Verse 5, "Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake." Pretty impressive!

Verses 6-7, "So the seven angels who had the **seven trumpets** prepared themselves to sound. The **first angel sounded**: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood and they were thrown to the earth...." Here is a lightning storm. You talk about a thunderstorm!

I suspect all of us have been in thunderstorms and perhaps had some hail. It can be pretty intimidating. Lightning flashing and hail falling can be pretty frightening. There's never been a storm like this. When God gets ready to unleash the weather, you talk about showing man how

puny he is. Oh, we can do so much. Look how great we are. Yeah, just one little “blow” (hurricane) came through here. It just rattled, shook and shivered things every which way and that was nothing by comparison.

Verse 7 continues, “...a third part of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.” Lightening triggers forest fires. Can you imagine this kind of storm that is occurring worldwide and fires breaking out everywhere? You wind up with a third of the vegetation destroyed. There is tremendous hail coming down; there is lightning and thunder. That would be just about the most frightening thing people would have been able to imagine up until then. But they haven’t seen anything yet. That’s only the first trumpet.

One of the things that has to happen is (go back to the plagues of Egypt) God has to humble haughty man.

In Isaiah 66:2, God says, “...But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.” – Somebody who has that spirit of humility and walking with God, rather than filled up with pride and thinking how great we are and what we can do.

Revelation 8:8, “Then the **second angel sounded**: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood.” This could refer to a giant meteor or asteroid that hits the earth. Where it describes a mountain burning with fire, that is perhaps some sort of gigantic volcanic activity.

Verse 9, the result is, “and a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.” Here is something horribly disruptive to the oceans. Can you imagine the horrible stinking mess you wind up with when a third of the sea life is destroyed?

Anybody who lived on the Atchafalaya River in Louisiana got a little bit of a taste of that with all the destruction of fish following the hurricane and the stench and smell out there. All these fish stinking will almost be enough to be a plague in itself. One dead fish can smell pretty bad; here’s a whole bunch of them.

Verses 10-11, this is followed by, “Then the **third angel sounded**: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water; and the name of the star is Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood; and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.” We are looking at a poisoning effect that this has on

the ground water and on the fresh water. A large part of this becomes undrinkable. Many people die.

Verse 12, “Then the **fourth angel sounded**: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened; and a third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.” This is some sort of disruption in the earth’s orbit—a tilt on the axis to where there is a disruption of the cycle. Everything that gives any sort of normalcy and stability is disrupted.

Verse 13, “And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, ‘Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitance of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound.’ **The next three trumpets are called the three woes**. The first four are the easy ones. We hadn’t even gotten to the three woes yet. I’ll tell you what, if what has already happened isn’t bad enough to be called a woe, you certainly don’t want to be around for these.

Revelation 9:1, “Then the **fifth angel sounded**: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. And to him was given the key to the bottomless pit [margin, “shaft of the abyss”].” “Star” is often used as symbolic of an angel. When “star” is mentioned in the earlier chapters, it could very well be referring to an angel or perhaps also a meteor or an asteroid.

Verses 2-3, “And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. And the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.” Here, it refers to power being given to unleash something.

John describes what he sees. This is one of the keys to understanding some of the symbolism. John is describing what he sees in the language of his day. When he describes this war-making power, he describes it as looking like a horde of locusts, yet not really locusts but sort of like that. He could be describing big attack helicopters. Can you imagine? What would that look like to John. The sky becoming dark with these big military attack helicopters. What would that look like to him? It would sort of look like a swarm of locusts or some sort of thing that comes through. Exactly what it was is not entirely possible to know. You find it described here as something rising up out of this great abyss. Later on we find the beast is pictured as ascending out of this great abyss, this bottomless pit (Revelation

17:8). We are looking at something that is pertaining to the beast power that is swallowed up. We are looking at something that comes up out of this great abyss, a great war-making power that comes upon the earth.

Verse 4 describes some sort of futuristic weapon, “They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God in their foreheads.”

Verse 5, “And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. And their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.”

Here is some sort of a bomb. There was a lot of work that was done on what is called the neutron bomb, which was supposed to kill people and not destroy buildings. This has always been one of the things that people like to come up with—how to wipe out the enemy without wiping out everything the enemy has. This is some sort of a weapon that they come up with.

In this case, it’s not exactly a neutron bomb. It doesn’t kill people. Perhaps it has something in it that affects the central nervous system or some sort of thing that creates some sort of pain and torment yet doesn’t necessarily result in death. It’s not destructive to plants, buildings and things of that sort. It only affects human life. God is going to protect those whom He has set apart.

It describes this torment. It describes it like the torment of a scorpion. If you have ever been stung by something like that, you realize how painful something of that sort can be. This is something that causes some sort of an allergic reaction that hangs on and on but does not necessarily end in death.

Verse 6, in fact, people are going to be so miserable they are going to seek death and not find it. Things they thought were going to deliver them are not going to deliver them. They are not going to come up with a vaccine that’s going to solve this problem. They are not going to run down and get something prescribed that is going to solve this.

Just like in Egypt. What in effect has to happen—just like the plagues of Egypt—people have to recognize that everything in which they have placed their trust and confidence to deliver them, can’t. The gods of Egypt are not gods. God executed vengeance against all the gods of Egypt. The ten plagues that came on Egypt executed judgment against the gods of Egypt. It showed that the gods of Egypt were not gods. They could not deliver the people who placed their trust and confidence in them.

John describes what these weapons look like. He talks about them looking like locusts.

Verse 10, “They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails....” This would indicate weapons that are fired out from the rear or from the bottom. What would it look like to John to see some sort of wave after wave of attack jets, attack helicopters or something like that coming over?

Verse 11, the real instigator is, “And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.” –Which means “destroyer.”

Verses 12-16, “One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things. Then the **sixth angel sounded**: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar, which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great River Euphrates.’ So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million, and I heard the number of them.”

Here was a great army that consisted of 200 million.

Verses 18-19, “By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.”

This is a pretty good description of a nuclear attack—fire, smoke and brimstone that issued out. It describes that their power is in their mouths and in their tails. It comes out both the front and the back. What you have described here is something that’s not quite as high tech—not quite the high technology of the fifth trumpet—but it’s pretty efficient. What you have described here is an insanity that breaks loose that would result in total destruction and annihilation of the human race if God did not step in to stop it. Really, a loss of sanity because the fifth trumpet (vv. 1-12), this great military machine that arises up out of the beast power, is described as something coming up out of this great industrial complex. This is the military power of the beast. Against who is it directed? Well, it is directed at those who counter-attack them in the last part of the chapter (vv. 13-21)—the sixth trumpet.

Let’s notice. Just hold your place and go back to Daniel 11.

Daniel 11:40, ““At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him....”” The king of the South is referring to the area south of Jerusalem, the Arab-Islamic combine centered there. The king of the North is the area north of Jerusalem, referring specifically to the beast power. Europe is going to come in with an invasion. They are going to invade the Middle East and take possession of this whole vital area (vv. 40-41). *This marks the onset of the Tribulation—this period of Tribulation against the people of God spiritually (the Church) and God’s people nationally (physical Israel)*. This is going to go on. The whole world is going to be tied up, dominated and acquiescing to this.

But there’s going to be trouble and rumblings.

Verse 44, we are told, ““But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many.””

As time continues into the Tribulation, the beast power is going to be more and more convinced that there is trouble and resistance in the East—problems and rumblings in nations like China, India and what used to be Soviet Central Asia. They are not satisfied with the status quo and with the place they have in the new world order that is going to come about. There is a lack of trust.

The beast power comes up with this technology and they think launching this pre-emptive blitzkrieg-type of an attack will resolve their problems. They launch it, all right, and it is tremendously devastating and destructive. But there is a counter-attack. The only place you can put together an army of 200 million is from places like China, India and that area. This vast invasion army has prepared a nuclear attack and an all-out nuclear attack is launched against Europe.

Very likely this is the timing of the destruction of Rome that you read of in Revelation 18. This takes place perhaps just days or a week or two prior to the very end—just right down to the wire—as the sixth angel sounds (Revelation 9:13) and this nuclear attack is launched that is destructive to the beast power. When this is launched, a third of the people die as a consequence of this attack (Revelation 9:18). They don’t have quite the sophisticated technology.

Revelation 9:19-21, “For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm. But the rest of mankind, who were not

killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.”

What is the idolatry God is talking about? – Materialism, violence and sorceries. Interestingly enough, the word “sorcery” in the Greek language is “pharmakon” or “pharmakeia.” It could very easily refer to drugs and the drug problems that are so prevalent—the drug pushers and all of the things connected with that. That’s the sense. We even get our modern word “pharmacy” from “pharmakeia.” The term referred to various potions, poisons and things that were mixed up, various concoctions that certainly included many of the things that are commonly abused drugs of today. That may very well be a reference to that sort of thing. Certainly it is one of our major social problems. Violence, drug dealings, immorality, theft—a pretty good rundown of major social problems we encounter.

We see these trumpets blown and God’s hand removed.

Verses 13-14, “Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great River Euphrates.’”

Euphrates is evidently going to be sort of a dividing line in terms of a sphere of influence with what are called the kings of the East and the beast power. This is going to result in an armed invasion of the Middle East. The beast and the false prophet have their headquarters in Jerusalem. For this period of time, they have made Jerusalem the place from which they are seeking to direct the new world order they are establishing. We will get to that in a moment.

But this matter of the Euphrates—the Euphrates River right now is in the nation of Iraq, close to the border with Iran. It is close to the Iran-Iraq border. Based on this prophecy, we have speculated as to whether or not there may literally be a dismemberment of Iraq. It’s sort of interesting. The area where the Shites are, in southern Iraq, is the area to the east of the Euphrates River and they, of course, are tied in with the Iranians, in the sense that they are sort of allied with them. It’s very possible that Iraq may become dismembered at this point in time or a little later on when the beast power invades

the Middle East and they simply choose not to go beyond the river Euphrates.

Anciently, the Euphrates River was the line of demarcation between the Roman Empire and the Partheon Empire. The Partheon Empire stretched through Iran and into India, and then the Roman Empire stretched from the Euphrates to the west on through Western Europe. That was sort of the line of demarcation between East and West and in many ways still serves that point.

What we are looking at—there have been demon spirits that have been restrained and have not been allowed to progress beyond that point. Satan and his demons can go no further than what God allows. One of the reasons they don't do worse than what they have done is because of restraints that God places. In the book of Job, you find that Satan can't go beyond what God permits him to do. When God removes restraints, there are things that happen. At the appropriate time, God removes certain restraints. He simply takes hands off and allows these things.

Now we have an inset. **Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 all provide an inset into the story flow.**

We don't come to the seven last plagues until we get to chapters 15 and 16. *The purpose of an inset is to go back and pick up some threads of the story and bring them down to this point.* Here, we are down to the point just before Christ returns because, after all, the seventh trump is the last trump, isn't it? When are we going to be changed from mortal to immortal?

I Corinthians 15:52, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

We are not at the last trump yet. We are just prior to it. Now, we are going to go back and pick up details of the earlier story and bring them down.

Revelation 10:1-4, "And I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head; his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. And he had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. And when he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.'" That was not something that needed to be written.

Verses 5-6, "And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his hand to

heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer." —Or as one translation renders it, "no further delay." There would no longer be a lengthening of time.

Verse 7, but rather, "but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets." We are coming down to a point where there should be no further delay.

As we come down, chapter 11 follows right on the heels of chapter 10. When the seven thunders had finished, it is at this point that John is told that the time is now come for God to begin to step in. Here we are picking up an earlier sequence. We are picking up the seven thunders uttered earlier.

What do the seven thunders have reference to?

The most likely explanation that I have ever heard of this is one that I discussed with an evangelist in the Church a number of years ago. Down through the centuries the Church of God has thundered God's message. The message that God delivered through them has been thundered to the world. You know, some thunder is near, close, loud and overwhelming. Other thunder has a faint distant roll. It's thunder, but it is a roll of thunder that is faint in the distance. Some is closer and has great power. *The point is that down through the centuries, each of the seven Churches has thundered God's message.* Some have been a faint distant echo; others have been a powerful blast. At the time when the messages of all the seven Churches have been delivered, it is at that point that there's no longer a reason to wait any longer. Rather, it is time for God to step in. It is the culmination when the seventh angel sounds. Everything will come to a climax.

Revelation 10:11, John is told, "And he said to me, 'You must prophecy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.'"

It continues on. There isn't really a break in the sequence.

Revelation 11:1, "Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, 'Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.'"

Verses 3-4, "And I will give power to my two witnesses...These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth." *The two olive trees are symbolic of the two witnesses.*

Verses 14-15, as we come on down, we pick up the story flow again, “The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly. Then the seventh angel sounded....”

Chapters 10 and 11 provide an inset. They go back and pick up the story, bringing us down through the role of the Church in the end time. We are not going into chapter 11 very much this evening. That deals with the work of the two witnesses.

Each of the seven Churches has its job to do. Some do their job powerfully; others do their job faintly. Christ is going to be more pleased with the job some have done than others. There is a job that each of the seven Churches has to do, based on the circumstances of their time and age, the opportunity set before them and the zeal they have to pursue those opportunities. The time is going to come when the thunderings will cease and God begins to fulfill these things that will take place.

One interesting thing—John is told in Revelation 10:8-9 that he is given a book and told to take it and eat it.

Revelation 10:10, “And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.” It was sweet and it was tasty, but when he had eaten and digested it, it became bitter.

In many ways that’s the way prophecy is. It can be tasty. It can be interesting. It can be sort of like eating desert. It can be sort of the desert at Bible study when you get interested in these things—and that’s fine. A third of the Bible is prophecy, so prophecy is important. But two-thirds of the Bible isn’t prophecy. Those two-thirds are pretty important, too.

All the prophecy in the world won’t do you any good if you are not living a Christian life and doing what you should do—keeping the commandments, seeking to serve God and really walking with Him. Prophecy is given to encourage the people of God. It is given to warn specific nations and specific groups of what God’s judgment will be if they don’t repent. It is given as a proof of God. God is the One who can declare the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). Prophecy is given to stir up and motivate the people of God. It helps us to perceive where we stand in the overall scheme of things of the plan of God. It is able to stir up and inspire us to do the things we need to do and give us hope and encouragement with respect to the future.

It can be tasty when you eat it, but when you really digest it, when you really grasp what it is

talking about, some of these things are horrible. They really, really are. That’s the way it was with John. It was tasty to eat, but then as he digested it, it was bitter. Many things are going to happen and it will get so bad before it gets better. It’s like the world has to hit bottom before it can begin to surrender and recover. Until people are brought to the point that they’re prepared to really surrender unconditionally and turn their life and their will over to the care of God, there’s not going to be a whole lot that can be done. There has to be a consequence, so there are things that are going to take place.

We see these things are outlined. As we come down, we have the seventh seal: the **trumpet plagues**. The trumpets begin to sound. Evidently, **this final year—this Day of the Lord—signals God’s intervention**. The first trumpet starts out with tremendous cataclysmic storms—thunderstorms, hail storms, fires break out worldwide—terrific devastation of the environment, of grasslands and trees and tremendous fires. It’s followed by the second trumpet and destructiveness that occurs to the oceans and seas. Sea traffic is disrupted, sea life is destroyed and a third of the ocean waters become like blood. Very swiftly on the heels of that, the third trumpet, a third of the freshwater becomes poisonous and there are tremendous problems in that regard. There is tremendous death that takes place as a result. This is followed by the fourth trumpet blast which sees these great upset astronomical conditions that are just totally disruptive. It is followed by trumpets five, six and seven—what are called the **three woes**.

The first of those woes, trumpet 5, results in the military machine that ascended up out of the abyss—the beast system—launching an all-out attack on Asia with high-tech sophisticated weapons, attempting to quell it before anything gets out of hand. You see, the point is that they never really trust one another.

The second woe, trumpet 6, results in a great counter attack; a gigantic army is mobilized and counters an attack. A nuclear attack devastates Europe and sets the stage for the final gathering of armies.

When the seventh trumpet blows, the third woe, the armies that are converged in the area of Armageddon advance toward Jerusalem to be destroyed because as those armies come in, Christ returns and the seven last plagues are poured out in that final day—the day that Christ returns. These armies temporarily throw aside their disagreement with one another to seek to

repel what, for them, is going to look like an invasion from outer space. That's going to be stopped in a moment.

We come down through these trumpets. We see this inset that shows the work of God down through time. There are events that are going to occur in the end time.

In Revelation 11:1, there is a measuring of the temple or the Church. Mr. Herbert Armstrong felt that chapter 11:1, at least partially, had analogy to God's Church, in effect, to measuring up. It talks about measuring those who worship there.

The temple can be used to refer to a literal temple (to a building); it can be used metaphorically to refer to the Church collectively. Even our bodies are called the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Many times, several examples or analogies are used to refer to the same thing. In some cases, the same analogy or example is used to refer to two or three different things. The point of an example, analogy or figure of speech is to help illustrate a spiritual truth. It is to help physical people grasp something that is on the spiritual level by comparing it to something that is on the physical level.

That is why God's Church can be collectively compared to a temple. The temple was built as the dwelling place of God. The Church is pictured as collectively being a holy temple of the Lord—the spiritual temple.

In I Peter 2:5-6, Christians are compared to being living stones—like component parts. Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone. This is one example, one analogy. The term “temple” is also used to refer to individual Christians.

I Corinthians 6:19, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit....”

The same analogies apply to something a little differently. The Church is compared to the bride of Christ (Revelation 19:7; 21:9). We will marry Christ. Paul uses that analogy in Ephesians 5.

The whole point is that he's not saying the Church has changed into a literal building or the Church has changed into a woman. It's to illustrate an aspect of spiritual truth. It's to give us something physical that we can relate to, so that we have a concept of what it is God is describing that illustrates at least one aspect of what God is doing.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong felt that Revelation 11 was generally a reference to the Church at the end time—let's say a measuring that was going to be applied. I'm sure we may not understand every detail of certain prophecies until we have

arrived at the juncture in history where it's necessary for us to understand. It isn't necessary for us to understand everything in total detail right now. We have sort of a broad outline of understanding, and the closer we get to that juncture of history, the clearer some of the things will be.

We have a little bit of an overview, coming down through chapter 10.

Chapter 11, as I mentioned, gets to the two witnesses, which we will comment on briefly next time. We will comment on their work. They will be the ones primarily doing the work of God during the Tribulation when the Philadelphian Church is in a place of protection. The Laodiceans certainly have to witness in a personal way with their lives, as they have to come to grips with their lack of taking God's way seriously and their attempt to sort of have a foot in the world and a foot in the Church. They are going to have to get both feet in the same place.

Those events are yet to come. God will use these two individuals, these two witnesses. They are described as His representatives, in the way that He used Moses and Aaron in the court of Pharaoh, to serve as a witness and a testimony during this period of beast-power domination and control.

I think this pretty well brings us to the conclusion of our Bible study period this evening. We are already four Bible studies into Revelation. We have three more Bible studies in Revelation to wrap up things.