

## ***Apocalypse Now: Session Seven***

### *Three Sets of Seven: Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls*

*Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished. – Rev 15:1*

#### **The Three Sets of Seven: God’s Judgment on the World**

- The Seven Seals (Rev 6, 8:1-5)
  - These judgments represent a summary of God’s judgment on the world from the time of Jesus’ resurrection and ascension till His second coming.
  - Note: the fourth seal contains the consequence of the previous two seals. The pale horse is given authority over a fourth of the world, to kill by “sword” (2<sup>nd</sup> seal), by “famine” (3<sup>rd</sup> seal), as well as by other means (pestilence and wild beasts). Thus, we should assume the judgments of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> seal to be limited to the ¼ scope of the fourth seal.
  - The sixth seal, using the language of de-creation, portrays the climactic end of history.
    - Every instance of the word “earthquake” in Revelation describes the end of history (8:5; 11:13, 19; 16:18).
    - This alludes to the “day of the Lord” from the Old Testament (Isa 13:6, 9; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, 14; 2:2, 3; Mal 4:5).
    - The world is literally falling apart— islands go back into the sea, stars fall down from the sky, the sky rolls up like a scroll—it is like Genesis 1, but in reverse.
    - The unbelievers are in terror because the great day of the wrath of the Lamb has arrived.
  - The seventh seal serves as a literary device to introduce the seven trumpets, a recursive retelling of the same judgment the seven seals relays, but from a different perspective.
  
- The Seven Trumpets (Rev 8:6-9:21, 11:15-19)
  - Similar to the seals, the seven trumpets portray an apocalyptic image of the judgment of God poured out across the interlude between Christ’s first and second coming.
  - While the first four seals focused on God’s judgment directly on humans, the first four trumpets focus on the consequences of God’s judgment on the environment.
    - “John emphasizes...the judgment on nature, which suggests that one consequence of sin is that the world isn’t as fruitful and beneficent as it should be.” – Schreiner, *The Joy of Hearing*, p. 89

- *2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet*: The reference to the ships being could also refer to judgment upon the economy. Ships and their exotic wares are frequently referenced in the judgment upon Babylon in Rev 18:11-20, “Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in a single hour she has been laid waste.” (Rev 18:19)
- *4<sup>th</sup> Trumpet*: The darkening of the luminaries could also refer to the “darkening” men’s mind, a spiritual and intellectual judgment from God (cf. Rom 1:21). Thus, at the conclusion of the many judgments the earth-dwellers, despite all of the fantastic evidence before them, still refuses to repent (9:20-21).
- *The Three Woes*: An eagle flies overhead to interrupt the blowing of the trumpets, explaining that the last three trumpet blasts to come are much more dire—they are not even referred to as trumpets, but “woes”.
  - The word for eagle in Greek is the same word for “vulture,” as in, “Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.” (Matt 24:28).
    - The introduction of this bird here could be a sign that much death is about to take place, thus carrion will soon be available for feasting upon (cf. Rev 19:17-18, 21).
- *5<sup>th</sup> Trumpet (1<sup>st</sup> Woe)*: Locust horde from Hell.
  - Terrifying demonic locusts who apply their devouring tenacity *not* to vegetation, but to tormenting the earth-dwellers, leaving them contemplating suicide.
- *6<sup>th</sup> Trumpet (2<sup>nd</sup> Woe)*: 200 Million Chimeras
  - Why the Euphrates river?
    - “The Euphrates was the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire, and on the other side were the dreaded [Parthians](#). The Parthians had defeated Roman armies in 53 b.c. and a.d. 62 and were looking for opportunities for further plunder at the expense of Rome...Many of the terrible invasions of Palestine—by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians—came across the Euphrates. Thus it became not only the eastern boundary first of Israel and then of Rome but also a symbol of foreign invasion” (Osborne, BECNT: Revelation).
  - This massive army leave a third of mankind dead in their wake. This also could be a description of deception/false teaching because of the emphasis on the mouths of the horses (cf. 9:17-19). In Revelation, what comes out of people’s mouths represent teaching/words (cf. 1:16; 11:5; 16:14; 19:15).
  - Rev 9:20-21 seems to imply that this judgment as well only affects non-Christians.

- The Seven Bowls (Rev 15-16)
  - These are given the unique introduction: “Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.” (15:1)
  - These could, like the seals and trumpets, be another description of God’s judgment on sin from the time between Christ’s first and second coming, since all three end with final judgment.
  - These also could be unique, describing the climactic judgment that occurs at the conclusion of history. Arguments for this position...
    - The scope of their judgment is total, unlike the limited scope of the seals and trumpets.
    - They appear to only affect unbelievers (16:2; 4-7; 9; 11; 16)
    - The seals contain the trumpets—the seventh seal *is* the seven trumpets (8:1-2). There is no such connection between the seventh trumpet and bowls (cf. 11:15-19).
    - The sixth bowl prepares the world for the battle at Armageddon, which we read about in 19:11-21 and 20:7-10.
    - The claim that with the seven bowls “the wrath of God is finished” in 15:1 and the “It is done!” in 16:17

Seal #1: The White Horse (6:1-2) <b>Deception</b>	Trumpet #1: 1/3 of Trees Burned, All Green Grass (8:7) <b>Ecological</b>	Bowl #1: Harmful Sores (16:2) <b>Physical</b>
Seal #2: The Red Horse (6:3-4) <b>War</b>	Trumpet #2: 1/3 of Sea Turned to Blood, 1/3 Fish, 1/3 of Ships (8:8-9) <b>Ecological/Economic</b>	Bowl #2: Sea Turned to Blood, Everything Dies (16:3) <b>Ecological/Economic</b>
Seal #3: The Black Horse (6:5-6) <b>Poverty/Greed</b>	Trumpet #3: Wormwood, 1/3 of Rivers Made Bitter (8:10-11) <b>Ecological</b>	Bowl #3: Rivers Turned to Blood (16:4-7) <b>Ecological</b>
Seal #4: The Pale Horse (6:7-8) ¼ of the World Dies <b>Death/Sickness</b>	Trumpet #4: 1/3 Lights Darkened (8:12) <b>Ecological/Intellectual</b>	Bowl #4: Scorching Sun (16:8-9) <b>Ecological</b>
Seal #5: The Martyr's Cry (6:9-11) <b>Persecution</b>	Trumpet #5: Locusts from the Bottomless Pit (9:1-12) <b>Psychological</b>	Bowl #5: Kingdom of the Beast Plunged into Darkness (16:10-11) <b>Psychological/Ecological</b>
Seal #6: The Great Earthquake (6:12-17) <b>Final Judgment</b>	Trumpet #6: Chimera's from the Euphrates, 1/3 of mankind killed (9:13-21) <b>Death/Deception</b>	Bowl #6: Euphrates Dried Up, Deception of the Whole World for Armageddon (16:12-16)
Seal #7: Silence in Heaven (8:1-5) <b>Intro of Trumpets</b>	Trumpet #7: The Kingdom of Men becomes the Kingdom of God (11:15-19) <b>Final Judgment</b>	Bowl #7: "It Is Done!" (16:17-21) <b>Final Judgment</b>

The Scope of Judgment of the 3 Sets of 7

