

7 Seals, 7 Trumpets, 7 Plagues

Overview of each
and how they Inter-relate, one to another

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Seven Seals:

1st Seal: white horse with rider. Rider carries a bow and a crown was given unto Him and He went forth conquering, and to conquer

2nd Seal: Red horse: Power was given to rider to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another; and a great sword was given unto him. (Represents opposition to the Gospel rider, or war against the people of Christ.)

3rd Seal: A black horse with a rider having a pair of balances: A measure of wheat for a denarius and three measures of barley for a denarius; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. (This horse announces a famine of God's Word and Spirit. The true gospel is replaced by a doctrinal belief system, called orthodoxy. But doctrines and ceremonies cannot feed the soul, as Christ warned in His letter to the ecclesia in Pergamum (Rev 2:14-16)

4th Seal: A pale (green) horse with a rider whose name was Death, and the grave followed with him. And power was given unto them over the **FOURTH** part of the earth, to kill with sword (war)
and with hunger (famine)
and with death (disease),
and with the wild beasts of the earth.

The color of a deathly pale or green suggests a continued state of spiritual decline and of a greater hardening of the heart. The result is apostasy of the soul. We may think of heresies and errors as a consequence of rejecting the truth of the gospel (see Rev 2:20-23). The "wild beasts" are then a symbolic anticipation of the persecuting beasts of Rev 13 which were also "given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them" (Rev 13:7, 14,15).

5th Seal: Souls under the altar that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried out, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" White robes were given unto them. But they were told their fellowservants and their brethren would also be killed.

6th Seal: A great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree drops its late figs, when she is shaken by a might wind.

And the sky split apart as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

And the kings of the EARTH, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every slave, and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

For the great day of His wrath is come; and who is able to stand?

This is Christ's reply to the cry of the martyrs "under the altar" in the 5th Seal: "How long, how long until our blood is avenged." Christ says (in the 5th Seal) "The time is now."

Cosmic signs carry theological significance in Old Testament theology, because they were depicted as manifestations of the Creator, coming as the King and Holy Warrior on behalf of His covenant people.

The 6th Seal leaves us with the impression that there will be a universal ruin of all humanity.

7th Seal: Silence in heaven about the space of **half an hour** indicating that everything is over. The 7 Seals end with the Coming of Christ.

One hour in prophetic time is 15 days. If a day is a year in prophecy, then a 24 hour day symbolizes a 360-day year (a prophetic year is 360 days). Therefore, one hour is 1/24th of a day, so 1/24th of a 360-day year is approximately 15 days. **One-half hour would be approximately one week, or 7 days.**

Seven days is the period of time that Noah and his family were in the ark BEFORE the rain began.

"And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. . . **And it came to pass after seven days**, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth." Genesis 7:7,10.

Jesus, Himself, said:

"As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they were given in marriage (life was appearing to go on as usual) until the DAY that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. . . Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Luke 17:26,27

The 7th Seal Introduces the 7 Trumpets:

Interpretation of the Seven Seals:

In Israel's past God had sent four judgments on His rebellious covenant people: war, plague, famine and death (pestilence = disease) (See Lev 26:23-26; Deut 32:23-25, 42 ("My arrows"): Ezek 14:12-14,21). But these judgments were never God's final judgments. These served as preliminary judgments, to motivate His wayward people to return to God.

God remains in control even when His children die as martyrs. He also sets boundaries to the pale rider under the fourth seal (Rev 6:8). Only one fourth of the earth and its inhabitants can be affected.

John is indebted to the Old Testament for his imagery of heavenly cavalry. Zechariah described four horses with different colors in his visions (Zech 1:8-17 and 6:1-8) This indicates that we should look at the meaning of Zechariah's four symbolic horses before we interpret the four apocalyptic horse riders.

In Zech 6, the interpreting angel explains that the four charioteers signify the four spirits or winds of heaven, that are sent out as ministers of God, to fulfill the redemptive will of God in the entire hostile world. Zechariah's four visionary war-chariots were sent out into the world with a double mission: 1) to submit all the political world powers to the will of Israel's God (also Hag 2:7-10;2:20-23); and 2) to gather all believing Israelites and other believers to Jerusalem and Mount Zion (Zech 8:8, 20-23). The main purpose is the realization of God's plan of redemption and the restoration of true worship (Zech 8:22,23).

The Seven Seals depict what is happening to the Saints during this troublesome time period.

The Seven Trumpets

The persecuted ecclesia must remember that the glorified Christ is portrayed as an all powerful Lamb with "seven horns" (Rev 5:6). A "horn" in the Old Testament is the symbol of political and military power (Deut 33:17; Dan 7:24). The unrealistic imagery of a lamb with seven horns assures God's people that the apparently defeated Lamb of God now has omnipotent power to judge and to deliver.

The main theme of the introductory vision to the trumpets is the assurance that Christ hears the prayer requests of His oppressed people, as was stated directly in Hebrews 4:14-16.

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession (what you profess to believe). For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy (lovingkindness) and find grace to help in time of need."

Although the prayers of all the saints rise directly to God, they need the essential "incense" from God's own altar. This incense represents the divine reconciliation (Jesus paid the price) for our sins.

In his final act the angel uses the censer no longer for intercession but for judgment: fire WITHOUT incense. This indicates that the prayers of the saints (in 6:9-11) will be answered by judgments on earth, followed by the appearance of the Judge of all the earth, in conjunction with a cosmic earthquake. (Also see 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. . . “ Ezek 10:2

The series of the trumpets announces not merely the final wrath of God (God’s wrath means allowing us to reap what we have sown. This comes only under the seventh trumpet), but also a sequence of restricted judgments, which harm “only” one third of the earth (mentioned 11 times in Rev 8-9). These partial judgments of the first six trumpets are preliminary warning judgments. They warn the world concerning the last plagues to come and the unmixed wrath of God at the conclusion of the day of reconciliation when **no one can enter the temple in heaven** (Rev 15:1, 5-8) This is one proof that there is no Secret Rapture. During this time, NO ONE can enter the temple in heaven!

The first six trumpets are still sent from the golden altar of incense before God (Rev 9:13).

The 5th trumpet refers to “the seal of God” on the foreheads of God’s people (9:4) and thus seems to coincide with the end-time sealing of God’s servants in Rev. 7, a significant feature.

1st Angel/trumpet: hail and fire mingled with blood. **One-third** of the trees were burnt up and all green grass was burnt up.

2nd Angel/trumpet: A great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood. A third part of the sea creatures died, and **a third** of the ships were destroyed.

3rd Angel: Great star from heaven, burning as it were a light and it fell upon the **third part** of the rivers and upon the springs of water. And the name of the star is called Wormwood, and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

4th Angel: Sounded and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the **third part** of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

5th Angel: Star fell from heaven unto the earth and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit (abyss). Locusts and scorpions (first Woe)

6th Angel (2nd Woe) Angel says “Loose the four angels which are bound up in the great river Euphrates.....”

7th Angel: Ends when Jesus comes, but opens first into the 7 plagues or bowls. Thunderclaps, lightnings, an earthquake and a great hail storm (Rev 11:9)

The Theological significance of the seals and the trumpets:

The seals center on the martyrs slain because of their witness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Rev 6:9-11). The seals teach that discipleship of Christ implies suffering for Christ.

Daniel told the king of Babylon that Israel’s God “changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them” (Dan 2:21).

While the fifth seal (Rev 6:9-11) centers on the request of the martyred saints, the fifth trumpet portrays the judgments on the unbelieving world, on those only who “did not have the seal of God on their foreheads” (Rev 9:4). The last three trumpets are even characterized as “woes” to “the inhabitants of the earth,” the unregenerated world population. This basic contrast between the seals and the trumpets indicates that the two prophetic sequences focus on different people, while paralleling each other.

DEcreation!

The trumpets suggest the gradual undoing of the work of creation - DEceation!

Each trumpet judgment refers to a feature that corresponds to a day of the creation week: 1) earth; 2) sea; 3) rivers and springs of water; 4) sun, moon, stars; 5) locusts; 6) man; 7) kingdom. From this perspective the trumpet judgments touch all the six days of creation. The progressive destruction of God’s creation can be understood as a disqualification of the present inhabitants of the world.

It took God six days to CREATE the world. It will have taken Satan 6,000 years to DEcreate, or destroy, the world.

Seven Last Plagues:

Exodus Motif of the Plagues:

The purpose of the last plagues corresponds essentially to that of the ten plagues which fell on Egypt in Moses’ time: to reveal God’s righteousness in subduing and removing a persecutor. Bot the past and the future liberations of God’s people are manifestations of the faithfulness of the same covenant God.

Like the first four trumpet plagues in Rev 8:7-12, the first bowl plagues are poured out equally on the earth (16:2), the sea (v. 3), the rivers and springs (v.4) and the sun (v 8). The final judgments, however, follow in a more rapid pace and severity. The entire earth has become like ancient “Egypt,” that is, the oppressor of the Israel of God.

The fifth bowl plague is poured out “on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness” (16:10). This plague is similar to the ninth plague of Moses, when Egypt was covered with total darkness for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived” (Exod 10;23).

During the fifth plague the “kingdom” of the beast will be paralyzed by a supernatural and impenetrable darkness - spiritual darkness and possibly physical darkness as well, an appropriate verdict of heaven for those that have refused Christ as the Light of the world and have “loved darkness instead of light” (John 3:19).

From start till finish this apocalyptic book weaves literal and symbolic language together into one cloth. In Rev. 12, the “woman” of God brings forth “a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter” (v.5). Here figurative and literal language are blended to convey a message with sufficient clarity.

The sixth and seventh plagues describe their objects as “ the great river Euphrates” and “Babylon the Great” (16:12,19).

It is essential to understand the covenantal character of all the plagues. The exodus motif, which unites all bowl judgments, serves the higher purpose of the liberation of the oppressed Israel (meaning, true Christians). The character of the plagues as covenant-

curses becomes evident with the connection of the last plagues with the ten plagues on Egypt is recognized.

No less important was God's act of "holy war" to deliver His people from Egypt's persecuting arm: the sudden drying up of the Red Sea. Egypt's plagues were recognized by Pharaoh's officials as the "finger of God" (Ex 8:19), because of the oppression of the Israelites (Ex 10:7). The last plagues raise the world's awareness to its persecution of the followers of Christ. This is finally accomplished by the sixth and seventh plagues.

These final plagues provide the exodus deliverance of the Israel of God. Remarkably the last plagues are not patterned after the Egyptian plagues but after the historic fall of the Babylonian Empire.

1. Babylon functioned as the oppressor of Israel.
2. The Euphrates was an integral part of Babylon, protecting it and thus hostile to Israel.
3. The drying up of the Euphrates River indicated God's judgment on Babylon, causing its sudden downfall. It functioned as preparation for Israel's deliverance.
4. Cyrus and his allied kings of the Medes and the Persians (Jer 50:41; 51:11, 28) came to Babylon as the predicted "kings from the east," to fulfill God's purpose. They were the enemies of Babylon and the deliverers of Israel. Cyrus was "anointed" by the Lord to defeat Babylon and to set Israel free (Isa 45:1)
5. Daniel and the Israel of God constituted the repentant, faithful covenant people of God within Babylon (see Daniel 9).

These theological characterizations are the essentials of the fall of Babylon. In the book of Revelation, Babylon represents the archenemy of Christ and His ecclesia. In the time of the end both Babylon and Israel will be universal (the TRUE followers of Christ everywhere they may be on the earth), their territorial scope worldwide. The gospel is explicitly sent out "to every nation, tribe, language and people" (Rev 14:6). This fourfold emphasis stresses its universal extension. The subsequent announcement that "Babylon the Great has fallen" is founded on the fact that she has "made ALL the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries " (verse 8). The whole world has finally come under her spell (Rev 13:3,4,7)/

War against God is war against God's people.

In summary, the prophetic perspective of the last plagues in Revelation 15-16 intends to reveal God's pre-ordained plan for the triumph of His faithful ones. The God of Israel will intervene through His most spectacular Messianic deliverance in all history, up to that point.

However, a more spectacular deliverance will be at the final reconciliation in the last eon when God will eventually become ALL in ALL!

