

**A Brief
Overview
of the
Order of Events
in the Book of
Revelation**

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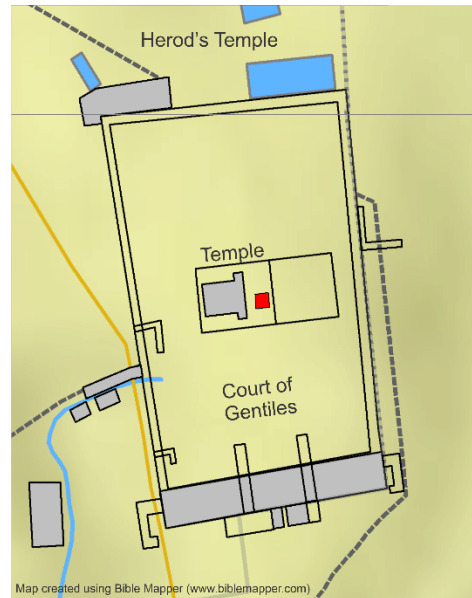
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Revelation

Background

In 70 AD, the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman army. By this time, the Book of Acts and most of the books of the New Testament have been written. The Christian Church had greatly expanded. After this, the apostle John wrote his Gospel around 85 AD, his three letters around 90 AD and then while on the island of Patmos in exile he received the “Revelation of Jesus Christ”. It is important to note that John recorded all that was told him and shown him. There are many mentions of “I saw”, “I heard” and the like. This is not something that John came up with or is “John’s theology”. There are also some things that are prophesied but not explained. For example, even in Daniel 12:8-9, some things are concealed. The same happens in this book with the seven thunders. John was to refrain from writing those things



down. God deliberately does not make His revelations so clear that everyone can see it. He uses imagery both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Jesus, in His earthly ministry, also used parables and imagery to obscure some of His teachings. Just as Jesus explained the parables to His disciples, so some of the imagery in Revelation is explained to John. Just as creation was a supernatural event that cannot be explained in “modern” scientific terms, so many of the events in Revelation cannot be explained “scientifically” since they are acts of God. Sometimes the same word has different meanings. For example, sometimes “stars” refer to angelic beings, other times to heavenly bodies. It is prudent not to try and explain every item in this book, since it will likely not be able to be explained until the events actually occur.

The Letters to the Seven Churches

John starts with a greeting to the seven churches in Asia.

He affirms the Trinity and the deity of Jesus and His atonement for our sins. He mentions that the believers are made into a kingdom and introduces the return of Jesus.



Jesus gives John instructions to write letters to the seven churches in Asia. These churches have now been in existence for several decades. One common theme in the letters is for the believers to be faithful, to persevere and overcome (conquer).

Ephesus (2:1-7)

This church excelled in maintaining sound doctrine and not tolerating evil men or false apostles. They have persevered and endured. Their problem was the lack of love.

Smyrna (2:8-11)

Smyrna is a poor church that has been suffering and will suffer more.

Pergamum ((2:12-17)

This church has been faithful and held fast, but have some that hold to false teachings. They are called to repent.

Thyatira (2:18-29)

These people had love, faith, service and perseverance. Their problem was a woman that called herself a prophetess that was leading believers astray.

Sardis (3:1-6)

Sardis had a reputation that they were alive, but they were actually dead. Jesus called them to wake up, repent and do what they did at first.

Philadelphia (3:7-13)

They are commended for persevering and not denying Jesus. As a reward, they will be kept from the hour of testing that was coming.

Laodicea (3:14-22)

These people were really quite apathetic and thought that they were rich. Jesus calls them to repent and be zealous for Him.

Chronological Issues

There is some discussion as to the chronologies of the seals, trumpets, bowls and woes. Do they strictly follow one another or do some of the later ones expand on an earlier one? In reading the text, there is a sequential moving from the seals to the trumpets and then to the bowls. There are some passages within the narrative that expand on some topics. The other topic is the rapture. Is the rapture prior to the tribulation period or during it? The fifth seal has those that have been martyred underneath the alter in heaven. These would be pre-tribulation believers from Abel on who had been martyred for the word of God. In Rev 7:3 we read about the servants of God that were sealed (sixth seal). There were 144,000 of the tribes of Israel. It is quite clear from the text that all of God's servants were to be sealed and since the number that were sealed are listed very specifically and do not include any Gentiles, we can conclude that the Gentile believers are no longer on the earth by this point. In Rev 7:9-14, there are believers

that come out of the great tribulation. This then would leave us with the raptured believers being taken just prior to the start of the tribulation and prior to the start of the trumpet judgements. The tribulation is a seven-year period divided into two 3 ½ year periods. This also means that everything that is past Rev 7:3 takes place after the believers have been raptured. There is a very dramatic event that happens about the time of the rapture, most likely just after the rapture. For this reason, interpreting anything past Revelation 6:17 must be in the future since that event has not happened yet.

The trumpet judgements have obviously not happened yet. Additionally, in order for the events of Rev 11:1-2 and Rev 13:6 to occur, a new temple must be built. Since this has not happened yet, it again verifies that all this is in the future. Jesus also said that the Gospel would be preached in the whole world and then the end would come. This prophecy has pretty much been fulfilled. (Matt 24:14)

The Seven Seals (5:1-8:1)

Chapter four opens with John, in the Spirit, standing in heaven. He sees the throne, one sitting on the throne and twenty-four elders sitting on thrones around the main throne. The four living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to God. In chapter five, we get to a book or scroll with seven seals that is taken by Jesus (the Lamb) from God the father. Jesus breaks the seals one at a time. It would appear then that the seals are the lead-up to what is inside. The inside being the end times judgement, the one-thousand-year reign and the final judgement and eternal life. The seven-year tribulation then starts after the seals are removed, possibly as late as the sixth trumpet.

First Seal

A white horse with a rider who went out to conquer.

Second Seal

A red horse with a rider who will take peace from the earth.

Third Seal

A black horse with a rider that has a pair of scales in his hand indicating famine.

Fourth Seal

An ashen horse with a rider named Death and Hades was following. They were to kill one quarter of the people on the earth with war, famine, pestilence and wild beasts.

Fifth Seal

John sees those that have been martyred because of their stand for the word of God under the altar. This would appear to refer to all the martyrs from creation to the rapture.

Sixth Seal

- This seal presents a divine judgement that cannot be mistaken for something “natural”.

- Overall, the description is of a very violent shaking of the earth and the heavens.
- There is a great earthquake. (While earthquakes have happened for millennia, this one is much more severe.
- The sun became black and the moon like blood.
- Stars falling to the earth.
- Sky is split.
- Mountains and islands are moved.
- People are really afraid and try to hide.
- People are now aware that this is a divine judgement.
- This cannot refer to the very end of time since the people are wanting to hide from the coming wrath of God, so this seems to be the start of the severe judgements coming on the earth.
- The 144,000 Israelites are sealed.
- A great multitude that is coming out of this great tribulation is standing before the throne and Jesus. The original Greek indicates that this is an ongoing process throughout the period of the tribulation.
- The multitude, elders and living creatures worship God.

Seventh Seal

- Silence in heaven for about one-half hour.
- Seven angels stand before God and seven trumpets are given them.
- Another angel threw fire from the alter to the earth and resulted in lightning, thunder and an earthquake.
- The seventh seal ushers in the trumpet judgements.

Seven Trumpets (8:2-11:19)

First Trumpet

Hail and fire mixed with blood is thrown on the earth and one third of the earth, trees and all grass is burned up.

Second Trumpet

Something like a great mountain burning with fire is thrown into the sea. This causes one third of the sea to become blood. Also, one third of the creatures in the sea died and one third of the ships are destroyed.

Third Trumpet

A star fell, burning like a torch, on one third of the rivers and springs of water.

Fourth Trumpet

A third of the sun, moon and stars are struck.

An angel proclaims woe on those that are on the earth because of the next three trumpets. We note that this again refers to a sequential recording of events.

Fifth Trumpet

A star (an angelic or spiritual being – commentators vary widely in their opinion of the identity of this being) opens the bottomless pit (where fallen angels or demons have been kept). The evil spirits are now released and torment people who do not have the seal of God for five months. They are not allowed to kill the people. This is also called the first woe.

Sixth Trumpet

Four angels with an army of two hundred million kill one third of mankind.

Of note here is that those who were not killed still did not repent.

Another angel comes with a little book. After he cried out with a loud voice there were seven peals of thunder. John was told not to write down what was spoken by the seven peals of thunder. The angel also proclaimed that there would be no more delay. This would seem to indicate that there is still a chronological progression happening. John is told to eat the little book and to prophecy again.

- John is told to measure the temple, but only the inside, not the court of the Gentiles.
- The outside of the temple is now given over to the nations to trample for 1260 days (three- and one-half years). This would be the start of the seven-year tribulation period.
- There will be two witnesses that will prophecy and have power to cause several types of plagues. No one will be able to harm them during this time.
- At the end of the 1260 days, a beast from the abyss will make war on them and kill them. They will be denied burial for three- and one-half days, but after that God will raise them from the dead and they will ascend to heaven as their enemies watch.
- There will be another great earthquake in which seven thousand people in Jerusalem will be killed.
- This is called the second woe, with the third one coming soon.

Seventh Trumpet

- There is a lot that happens as a result of this trumpet. It starts in Rev 11:15.
- The twenty-four elders worship God.
- Flashes of lightning, thunder, and earthquake and heavy hail.
- Sign regarding the woman who is then protected for the 1260 days.
- Sign regarding the dragon (Satan).
- War in heaven where Michael, the archangel, and the heavenly forces defeat Satan and his angels. Satan and his forces are now thrown to the earth.
- Satan, seeing that his time is short, now goes to make war against the believers.
- A beast now comes on the scene and Satan gives it his power, throne and authority.

- This beast will have power for forty-two months. This starts in Rev 13:5 and is not concluded until Rev 19:20.
- Interspersed in these chapters are other visions that are not necessarily chronological.
- The beast is worshiped and was rebellious against God.
- The beast was allowed to make war against the saints and conquer them.
- This beast will have authority over all the nations of the world.
- Another beast (false prophet) appears that exercises all the authority of the first one and also does great wonders. By this it will deceive people.
- The second beast also institutes the famous “mark of the beast”. Without this mark, people will not be able to buy or sell.
- Rev 14:1-5 speaks of the 144,000 Israelites that have been sealed. It would appear that this refers to the time at the end of the tribulation when Jesus comes back.
- Going back to the time of the beast, three angels come calling for the people to fear God and give Him glory. They also proclaim the fall of Babylon the great and that anyone that worships the beast, its image and receives the mark, will receive the full fury of God’s wrath.
- Rev 14:14-20 appears to be an overview of the end of the tribulation judgements.

Bowl Judgements (15:5-16:21)

We now come to the last judgements. They are specifically called the last, therefore we must take them to be chronologically after the previous judgements.

First Bowl

Harmful, painful sores for those with the mark of the beast.

Second Bowl

Everything in the sea died.

Third Bowl

Rivers and springs of water turn to blood.

Fourth Bowl

Sun is allowed to scorch people.

Fifth Bowl

The bowl is poured out on the throne of the beast. His kingdom was plunged into darkness. People were afflicted with pain and sores.

Sixth Bowl

The Euphrates river is dried up in preparation for the invasion of the kings from the east. Demonic forces come from the dragon (Satan), the beast and the false prophet and perform signs in order to gather the kings of the world for battle.

Seventh Bowl

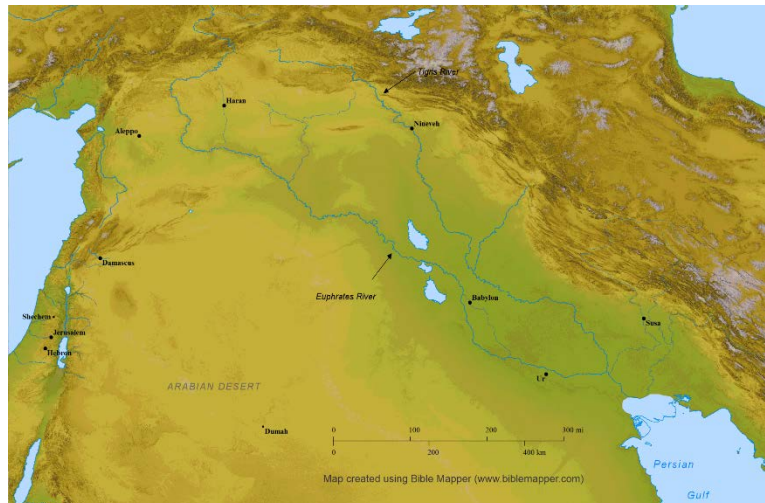
Lightning, thunder and a very great earthquake. Jerusalem will be split into three parts. Islands and mountains were moved and great hailstones came down.

The great prostitute and the beast (17:1-18)

In the time frame of the last bowl judgement, one of the angels shows John the judgement of the great harlot (prostitute). Some aspects that we are told:

- Kings of the earth committed immorality with her.
- The immorality spread to those on the earth.
- She displayed symbols of great wealth.
- She was blasphemous.
- She was responsible for many abominations.
- She was responsible for martyring believers.
- The woman is identified as the “great city that reigns over the kings of the earth”.

We can then deduce that the woman represents a false religion and all that is abominable and is contrary to all that is good according to God. It appears that the source will be the city of Babylon and this false religion and ideology will spread throughout the world. Chapter 18 seems to affirm this.



The end of this will be when Jesus comes back and defeats them, referring to the time of Rev 19:11 ff.

The fall of Babylon (18:1-24)

This is also in the time frame of the bowl judgements, possibly the last one. This represents a destruction of the city of Babylon.

The Return of Jesus (19:1-20:3)

Jesus comes riding on a white horse with the armies of heaven following Him. The beast, the kings of the earth and their armies came to fight against Jesus and His armies. The beast and the false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire and the rest are killed.

At this point, Satan is bound for one-thousand years and locked into the abyss.

The Thousand Year Reign of Jesus (20:4-6)

During the one-thousand-year reign of Jesus, those that have been martyred for the word of God and those who did not worship the beast or receive the mark of the beast during the tribulation will reign with Jesus. The rest of the dead will not come to life until after the end of the thousand-year reign of Jesus.

The Final Battle (20:7-10)

Satan is released at the end of the thousand-year reign of Jesus and will deceive the nations. The nations will then come up against the camp of the saints where fire will come and devour them. At this point, Satan is thrown into the lake of fire.

Great White Throne Judgement (20:11-15)

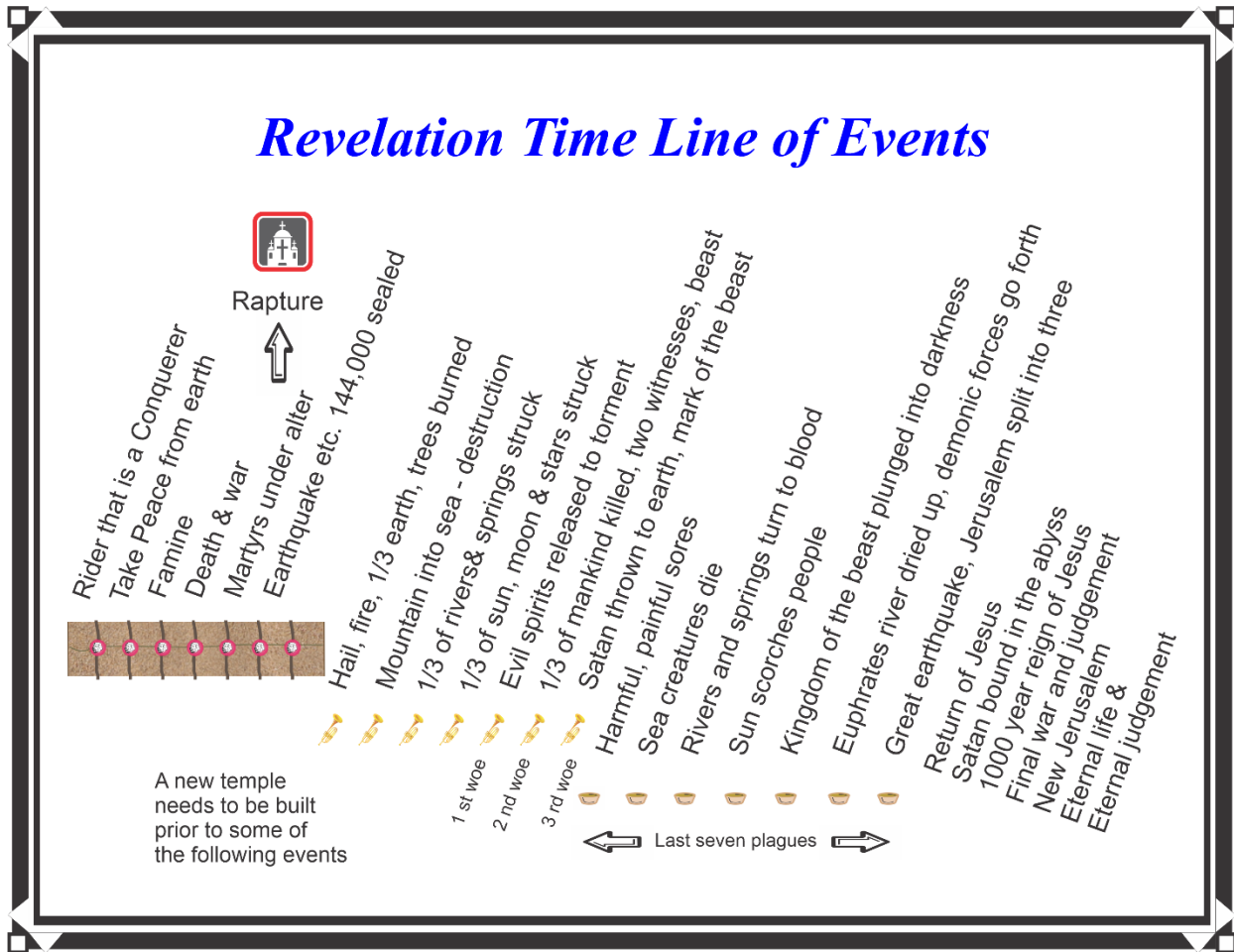
The dead are now judged and anyone whose name is not in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. The eternal, never ending judgement in the lake of fire is the second death.

The New Heaven and Earth (21:1-22:5)

At this point, there is a new heaven and a new earth and the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven.

- God and Jesus now dwell with mankind – a picture of the restoration of the beginning of creation when Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden with God.
- Those who overcome will inherit this eternal life.
- The New Jerusalem is described in detail as to its size and splendor.
- Only the people whose name is written in the Lamb's book of life will be in it.

Time Line Chart



Other relevant Scriptures

Rapture

1 Th 4:15-5:2

1 Cor 15:51-52

End Times

Dan 7, 9:24-27, 12

Matt 24 & 25