

People always like to know when something is going to happen, whether it is a weekend of activities, a church service or a day at work; a schedule of events is always appreciated. The book of Revelation records a schedule of events for the period that is designated "The End Times". The book of Revelation provides both a chronological and sequential record of God's final eschatological judgment which is also known as the Tribulation. Scripture does not provide enough detailed information to set dates for future events. In fact, we are exhorted that only the Father knows the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ (Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32), which is the major event that closes out the period of the Tribulation. This is clearly a warning to avoid date setting or speculative guessing.

The comfort for the believer in this Church Age is that these events will not take place until after the Church is raptured from the earth. God promised that Christians are not destined to wrath but to obtaining salvation (deliverance) through Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9). This deliverance, designated the rapture, is provided through the gathering together of the saints to meet Jesus Christ in the air. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: "For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up (raptured) together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." The wrath that Paul wrote about in 1 Thessalonians is the wrath of the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5). This article argues that the book of Revelation contains a divine record of many of the events of the Day of the Lord. A proper understanding of the chronological and sequential structure of the Revelation will help us understand that the Church is removed from the earth prior to these catastrophic judgments of God.

Although the Church will be removed before the wrath of God is executed during the Tribulation, the person who does understand the structure of Revelation will know the chronological and sequential timetable of the events contained in the book. This structure does not provide a date for when the Tribulation begins, but it does give a schedule of events to understand what happens after the Tribulation begins.

There are four major principles that expose the structure of the Revelation and show that the structure is both chronological and sequential. The book unfolds according to a prophetic timetable that reveals more precise definition and detail about the closing events of two periods which are designated "The Tribulation" and "The Great Tribulation". The four principles are: 1) the epistolary nature of Revelation; 2) the contextual structure based on Revelation 1:19; 3) the sequential nature of the septet judgments; and 4) the prophetic template of Daniel 9:27 (the seventieth week of Daniel) in comparison with the Synoptic Gospels and Revelation 4-19.

### **PRINCIPLE 1: EPISTOLARY NATURE**

The first principle is the recognition of the epistolary nature of the book. The Revelation, at least in part, is a letter written to seven churches in Asia Minor. Revelation begins with a prologue (1:1-8) and closes with an epilogue (22:6-21). The book, in part, contains seven exhortations to seven churches in Asia Minor (2-3). Although other common elements of epistolary literature are absent from the Revelation, these missing elements should not dissuade a person from acknowledging this aspect of the structure.

## PRINCIPLE 2: CONTEXTUAL STRUCTURE OF REVELATION 1:19

The second principle is stated in Revelation 1:19: "Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things that shall take place after these things." The Revelation is structured in part by the three literary timeframes that are mentioned in this verse: 1) the things which you have seen; 2) the things which are; and 3) the things that shall take place after these things.

The "things which you have seen" are recorded in chapter one. John recorded the initial vision of the glorified Jesus Christ in which he was commissioned to write the entire book of Revelation. Chapters two and three contain the "things which are." This is evidenced by the command to John: "Write in a book what you see (Rev. 1:11)," indicating the existence of these churches in John's day, and the present aspect of the "things which are". This section closes with the opening of the third section, "the things which shall take place after these things." Revelation 4-22:5 comprises this third section as indicated by chapter four and verse one: "After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, 'Come up here, and **I will show you what must take place after these things.**'" John was clearly provided a literary, chronological division to the book with this three-fold segmentation. This threefold division does not control the major content of the book as evidenced by the disproportional character of the three sections (1:1-20; 2:1-3:22; 4:1-22:5). The major content which relates to the Tribulation is contained in the third section of 4:1-22:5.

## PRINCIPLE 3: SEQUENTIAL NATURE OF THE SEPTET JUDGMENTS

The third structural principle concerns the sequential nature of the three septet (set of seven) judgments (seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls) of Revelation. The structure of the Revelation is determined, in part, by one's understanding of whether the three septet judgments are sequential or simultaneous. The simultaneous view sees a recapitulation of the septets in which the judgments are parallel to each other. The recapitulation view understands that the three sets of judgments take place in the same order, at the same time sequence, with varying detail about each depiction of the judgment. There first seal, first trumpet and first bowl (second, third, etc.) are just three views of the same judgment that takes place at the same time. Each recapitulation reviews previous events and adds further details.

The sequential view understands the seals, trumpets, and bowls as successive judgments that proceed out of each other. The sequential view understands that the seven seals are broken and executed one after the next in sequential and chronological order. When the seventh seal is broken, then the seven trumpets are executed as these seven trumpets are the contents and judgments of the seventh seal. When the seventh trumpet is blown, then the seven bowl judgments are executed and complete the "wrath of God."

This author argues for the successive view of the septet's judgments, i.e., the trumpets sequentially follows the seals, and the bowls sequentially follow the trumpets. The successive structure does not negate a recapitulation or review of other visions in the Revelation as John does portray visionary scenes which summarize the fulfillment of past prophetic events and previews eschatological events to come (ex. Rev. 7:9-17; 14:6-13).

The simultaneous view emphasizes that there are similarities between the septets as evidenced by patterns of devastation. Each set of judgments is more intense and destructive than the previous ones. The following are a few examples to illustrate this point. The second trumpet destroys one-third of the seas while the second bowl turns all of the seas into blood (Rev. 8:8-9; 16:3). The third trumpet pollutes one third of the rivers and springs while the third bowl transforms all

of the rivers and springs to blood (Rev. 8:10-11; 16:4-7). The fourth trumpet darkens one third of the sun, moon and stars while the fourth bowl causes the sun to intensify and scorch the people of the earth (Rev. 8:12-13; 16:10-11).

Although there are some, minor similarities between the septets; the differences are more crucial and determinative for the structure of these septet judgments. The seals generally differ in content from the trumpet and bowl plagues. There is no alignment between the first, fifth, and seventh parallel judgments of the septets. Even when there is some general similarity, the details of the judgments clearly show a difference through the intensity and nature of the judgments. An example is seen in that the second trumpet destroys a third of the earth's waters (8:8) while the second bowl destroys all of the earth's waters (16:3). These and many other differences argue against the simultaneous view of similar identity and sequential timeframe.

The following reasons are offered as definitive evidence for the successive structure of the seal, trumpet and bowl judgments.

A "plain face" reading of Revelation argues that the three sets of septet judgments (seals, trumpets, and bowls) are sequential. The two Greek phrases καὶ εἶδον (and I saw) and μετὰ ταῦτα (after these things) indicate a sequential movement of the visions beyond just the reception of these visions by John. It should also be acknowledged that these phrases indicate a chronological movement as read throughout the many contexts of Revelation (1:19; 4:1; 7:1,9; 9:12; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1; 20:3; μετὰ ταῦτα, and 5:1,2,6,11; 6:1,2,5,12; 7:2; 8:2; 9:1;10:1;14:6;15:1,2; 17:3,6; 19:11,17,19; 20:1,4,11,12; 22:1; καὶ εἶδον. The seven seals are followed by the seven trumpets, and the seven trumpets are followed by the seven bowls (Rev. 6:1-17; 8:1-9:21; 16:1-21). The bowls evidence a sequential pattern as they are called "the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished (Rev. 15:1)." Sequential character is manifested within each septet.

The use of ordinal rather than cardinal numbers indicates succession: τὴν δευτέραν; τὴν τρίτην; τὴν τετάρτην; τὴν πέμπτην; τὴν ἕκτην (second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth; rather than one, two, three, four, five, six). The text indicates three sequential sets of judgments which have an order of first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, rather than just a numbering of one, two, three, four, five, six and seven.

The successive nature of the judgments is evidenced in the breaking of the seventh seal which leads directly and sequentially into the execution of the seven trumpets: "And when He broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God; and seven trumpets were given to them (Rev. 8:1-2)." The seven angels then execute the seven trumpet judgments bringing an intensification of destruction on the earth (Rev. 8:7-9:21).

There is also a successive building within each septet to a climactic conclusion. For example, a sequential progression is noted by the parallel between the three woes and the fifth, sixth and seventh trumpets (Rev. 8:13; 9:1,12; 9:13-14,11:14-15).

Revelation 8:13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, "**Woe, woe, woe** to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

Revelation 9:1 Then the **fifth angel sounded**, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him.

Revelation 9:12 The **first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming** after these things.

Revelation 9:13 Then the **sixth angel sounded**, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, 14 one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

Revelation 11:14 The **second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.**

Revelation 11:15 Then **the seventh angel sounded**; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”

The seventh trumpet is also linked to the seven bowls. John states that when the seventh angel sounds the trumpet, "then the mystery of God is finished" (Rev. 10:7). At the introduction and conclusion of the bowl judgments, John emphasizes that in them the wrath of God is finished (Rev. 15:1, 8; 16:17). The seventh trumpet brings forth the execution of the seven bowls and the completion of God's wrath (Rev. 11:15-19).

Successive progression is also seen in relationship to the one hundred and forty-four thousand Jewish men who are sealed on their foreheads (Rev. 7:4-8). They are sealed after the sixth seal is broken and before the seventh seal is broken, and the release of the plague by the four angels (Rev. 7:1-8). Later in the Revelation, the fifth trumpet brings a demonic plague on those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (Rev. 9:4). The sealing of the 144,000 will be an act of protection in anticipation of various judgments that follow, as illustrated by the fifth trumpet judgment. The 144,000 are later seen on Mount Zion in heaven with the Lamb and the assembly of heaven's court (Rev. 14). Although protected from the many trumpet judgments, it appears that they are martyred during this period for their testimony. There are present with the Lamb in heaven prior to the execution of the bowl judgments.

The destruction of Babylon demonstrates another sequential and chronological development of Revelation. Prior to the execution of the seven bowl judgments, Revelation 14:8 states: “And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.’” Later, after six bowls have been executed and when the seventh angel pours out of the seventh bowl, the Revelation states: “The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath (Rev. 16:19).” Revelation 17-18 then follows with a detailed description of the destructive judgment of religious and commercial Babylon.

In summary, the crucial differences between the septet judgments argues for a successive view including: the "plain face" reading of the text, the sequential character within each septet, the use of ordinal numbers, the sequential aspect of the seventh part of each septet, and the contextual clues of progression.

The following outline represents the chronological and sequential development of the Revelation.

### **A STRUCTURAL OUTLINE OF THE REVELATION: SEQUENTIAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL**

#### **1. THE THINGS WHICH JOHN HAD SEEN 1:1-20**

- 1.1 PROLOGUE OF THE LETTER 1:1-8
- 1.2 VISION OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE CHURCHES 1:9-20

#### **2. THE THINGS WHICH ARE: LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES 2:1—3:22**

- 2.1 CHURCH AT EPHESUS 2:1-7
- 2.2 CHURCH AT SMYRNA 2:8-11
- 2.3 CHURCH AT PERGAMUM 2:12-17
- 2.4 CHURCH AT THYATIRA 2:18-29
- 2.5 CHURCH AT SARDIS 3:1-6
- 2.6 CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA 3:7-13

2.7 CHURCH AT LAODICEA 3:14-22

**3. THE THINGS THAT WILL TAKE PLACE AFTER 4:1—22:5**

3.1 GOD ENTHRONED IN HEAVEN 4:1-11 (**THE BEGINNING OF TRIBULATION, DANIEL 9:27, 70<sup>TH</sup> WEEK**)

3.2 THE LION-LAMB TAKES THE BOOK 5:1-14

3.3 THE LAMB BREAKS SIX SEALS 6:1-17

3.3.1 SEAL ONE: WHITE HORSE OF FALSE CHRISTS 6:1-2

3.3.2 SEAL TWO: RED HORSE OF WARFARE 6:3-4

3.3.3 SEAL THREE: BLACK HORSE OF INFLATION AND FAMINE 6:5-6

3.3.4 SEAL FOUR: ASHEN HORSE OF DEATH 6:7-8

3.3.5 SEAL FIVE: MARTYRS UNDER THE ALTER 6:9-11

3.3.6 SEAL SIX: GREAT DAY OF GOD'S WRATH 6:12-17 (**MIDPOINT AND BEGINNING OF GREAT TRIBULATION**)

3.4 SEALING OF THE 144,000 7:1-8

3.5 MARTYRS FROM THE GREAT TRIBULATION 7:9-17 (Narrative Preview or Spotlight)

**3.6 THE LAMB BREAKS THE SEVENTH SEAL 8:1-18:24**

3.6.1 THE SEVEN ANGELIC TRUMPETERS PREPARE 8:1-6

3.6.2 TRUMPET ONE: 1/3 OF THE EARTH DESTROYED 8:7

3.6.3 TRUMPET TWO: 1/3 OF THE SEA DESTROYED 8:8-9

3.6.4 TRUMPET THREE: 1/3 OF FRESH WATER DESTROYED 8:10-11

3.6.5 TRUMPET FOUR: 1/3 OF CELESTIAL BODIES DESTROYED 8:12-13

3.6.6 TRUMPET FIVE: THE FIRST WOE WITH MANKIND TORMENTED FOR FIVE MONTHS 9:1-12

3.6.7 TRUMPET SIX: THE SECOND WOE WITH 1/3 OF MANKIND DESTROYED 9:13—11:14

3.6.7.1 FOUR ANGELS AND A DEMONIC ARMY 9:13-21

3.6.7.2 A STRONG ANGEL, A LITTLE BOOK AND PREPARATIONS FOR THE 7TH TRUMPET 10:1-11 (Revelation)

3.6.7.3 THE LIFE, MINISTRY AND MARTYRDOM OF THE TWO WITNESSES 11:1-14 (Narrative Spotlight)

**3.6.8 TRUMPET SEVEN: THE THIRD WOE WHICH IS THE SEVEN BOWLS 11:15-18:24**

3.6.8.1 SUMMATION OF THE SEVENTH TRUMPET 11:15-19

3.6.8.2 THE PERSECUTION OF ISRAEL BY SATAN 12:1-17 (Narrative Spotlight)

3.6.8.3 THE DECEPTION OF UNHOLY BEASTS AND WAR AGAINST THE SAINTS 13:1-18 (Narrative Spotlight)

3.6.8.4 THE LAMB AND THE 144,000 IN HEAVEN 14:1-5

3.6.8.5 ANGEL ONE PROCLAIMS THE GOSPEL 14:6-7

3.6.8.6 ANGEL TWO PRONOUNCES JUDGMENT ON BABYLON 14:8

3.6.8.7 ANGEL THREE PRONOUNCES JUDGMENT ON BEAST WORSHIPPERS 14:9-12

3.6.8.8 A PRONOUNCEMENT OF BLESSINGS ON MARTYRS 14:13

3.6.8.9 THE SON OF MAN EXECUTES THE SICKLE JUDGMENTS 14:14-20

**3.6.8.10 THE EXECUTION OF THE SEVENTH TRUMPET: THE SEVEN BOWLS 15:1—18:24**

3.6.8.10.1 PRAISE FOR THE SEVEN ANGELS WITH SEVEN PLAGUES 15:1-4

3.6.8.10.2 PREPARATION OF THE SEVEN ANGELS WITH THE BOWLS 15:5-8

3.6.8.10.3 BOWL ONE: MALIGNANT SORES 16:1-2

3.6.8.10.4 BOWL TWO: THE SEAS ARE DESTROYED 16:3

3.6.8.10.5 BOWL THREE: THE FRESH WATERS ARE DESTROYED 16:4-7

3.6.8.10.6 BOWL FOUR: SCORCHING HEAT ON MANKIND 16:8-9

3.6.8.10.7 BOWL FIVE: DARKNESS ON THE KINGDOM OF THE BEAST 16:10-11

3.6.8.10.8 BOWL SIX: THE EUPHRATES DRIES UP IN PREPARATION FOR WAR 16:12-16

3.6.8.10.9 BOWL SEVEN: FINAL JUDGMENT OF BABYLON 16:17—18:24

3.6.8.10.9.1 THE EXECUTION OF THE SEVENTH BOWL ON BABYLON 16:17-21

3.6.8.10.9.2 AN ANGEL REVEALS AND EXPLAINS THE JUDGMENT OF THE HARLOT OF BABYLON 17:1-18

3.6.8.10.9.2.1 AN ANGEL REVEALS THE JUDGMENT OF THE HARLOT OF BABYLON 17:1-6

3.6.8.10.9.2.2 AN ANGELS EXPLAINS THE JUDGMENT OF THE HARLOT OF BABYLON 17:7-18

3.6.8.10.9.3 AN ANGEL ANNOUNCES AND EXPLAINS THE JUDGMENT ON BABYLON 18:1-24

- 3.6.8.10.9.3.1 AN ANGEL ANNOUNCES THE FALL OF BABYLON 18:1-3
- 3.6.8.10.9.3.2 A WARNING TO FLEE FROM BABYLON 18:4-8
- 3.6.8.10.9.3.3 THE WORLD LAMENTS THE SUDDEN DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON 18:9-20
- 3.6.8.10.9.3.4 BABYLON IS VOID OF ACTIVITIES 18:21-24.
- 3.7 THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST TO JUDGE AND DELIVER 19:1-21 **(THE GREAT TRIBULATION ENDS)**
  - 3.7.1 PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS JUDGMENT OF THE HARLOT 19:1-5
  - 3.7.2 PRAISE TO GOD FOR THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB 19:6-10
  - 3.7.3 THE COMING OF JESUS TO JUDGE THE WORLD 19:11-21
- 3.8 THE MILLENNIAL REIGN OF JESUS CHRIST 20:1-15
  - 3.8.1 SATAN IS BOUND IN THE ABYSS FOR 1,000 YEARS 20:1-3
  - 3.8.2 THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM 20:4-10
  - 3.8.3 THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT 20:11-15
- 3.9 THE NEW HEAVEN, EARTH AND JERUSALEM 21:1--22:5
  - 3.9.1 A NEW HEAVEN, EARTH AND JERUSALEM 21:1-4
  - 3.9.2 LIFE FOR THE SAINTS, DEATH FOR THE SINNERS 21:5-8
  - 3.9.3 A DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW JERUSALEM AND BRIDE 21:9-27
  - 3.9.4 THE NEW THRONE ROOM OF GOD 22:1-5

#### **4. EPILOGUE OF THE LETTER: 22:6-21**

- 4.1 JESUS PROMISES THAT HE IS COMING 22:6-9
- 4.2 A FINAL CHARGE OF EXPECTATION AND OBEDIENCE 22:7-17
- 4.3 A WARNING NOT TO ALTER THE REVELATION 22:18-21

### **PRINCIPLE 4: AN EXEGETICAL CORRELATION BETWEEN THE SEVENTIETH WEEK OF DANIEL 9:27, THE SYNOPTICS AND REVELATION 4-19**

The fourth principle for understanding the structure of Revelation is the correlation of the seventieth week of Daniel 9:27 with the synoptic eschatological discourses of Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, and Revelation 4-19.

#### **A Brief Explanation of the Seventieth Week of Daniel 9:24-27**

Daniel 9:24 opens with the announcement that: "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*." The interpretation of these goals is not germane to the structure of the seventy weeks so no exposition is offered in this article. Daniel 9:25-27 states: "So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. 26 "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. 27 "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate." In these verses, Daniel records three distinct time units of seven weeks, sixty-two weeks and one week.

The central interpretive questions to understand the chronological fulfillment of this prophesy are: 1) what is the meaning of "seventy weeks" and, 2) what is the structure of the three numerical

units by which the "seventy weeks" is divided. The noun "seven" appears twenty times in seventeen verses. The basic meaning of this Hebrew word is a unit of seven. It can be a period of seven days, seven weeks, or seven years. It is used three times in conjunction with days, (Ezek. 45:21; Dan. 10:2,3); six times as a regular week or seven-day period of time (Gen. 29:27,28; Lev. 12:5; Deut. 16:9 twice; Jer. 5:24); five times in reference to the Feast of Weeks (Exod. 34:22; Num. 28:26; Deut. 16:10,16; 2 Chron. 8:13); and six times in Daniel 9:24-27.

Some commentators take the seventy weeks as symbolical numbers with no definite time period. Vern Poythress argues that this is an Old Testament symbolical pattern that does not need to be understood as either years or days. He contends there is no firm grammatical or historical evidence for understanding that the weeks are weeks of years. He concludes that at the central point of the temporal language in Dan 9:24-27 is a "sabbatical and jubilee pattern." [Hermeneutical Factors in Determining the Beginning of the Seventy Weeks, 1985, p. 143]

Thomas E. McComiskey analyzes the various views for the beginning and ending of the seventy weeks and concludes that the numbers must be used in a symbolic sense because none of the chronological schemes works out exactly. He suggests that these numerical concepts had a distinct significance in biblical and Ancient Near Eastern literature. This significance is a "concept of totality or fullness." [The Seventy Weeks of Daniel against the Background of Ancient Near Eastern Literature, 1985, p. 37]

There are many good arguments for viewing the seventy weeks as a literal period of seventy units of seven years rather than weeks of days or interpreted symbolically as an indefinite period of time. [See Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ pp. 115-40 by Harold W. Hoehner for an excellent treatment the Terminus a Quo and Terminus a Quem of Daniel 9:24-27].

Leon Wood argues that seventy weeks should not be taken as an indefinite period because of the definite numbers which are used to divide the seventy week period into three units. Wood asserts that a symbolic view makes it difficult to understand the definite numbers, seven, sixty-two, and one as applied to divisions within the seventy weeks. He suggests that it is better to understand seventy weeks as a literal period of time with definite divisions. [A Commentary on Daniel, 1976, p. 247]

Secondly, this prophecy is an answer to the prayer of Daniel which is based upon his understanding of a literal timeframe of seventy years in Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10-12. (Jeremiah 25:11 'This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 'Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,' declares the LORD, 'for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation. Jeremiah 29:10 "For thus says the LORD, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. 11 'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. 12 'Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.)

The captivity was a result of the judgment of God upon the nation for the violation of the sabbatical rest of the land. The implication from Jeremiah, in light of Levitical sabbatical laws, was that the people of Israel had violated the sabbatical rest for four hundred and ninety years. This time of violation continued from their arrival in the Promised Land until the destruction of the first temple. Therefore, they were exiled for seventy years because they had failed to obey the sabbatical laws of Exodus 23:10-11 and Leviticus 26:34-35, 43. Thus, Daniel may have been thinking in terms of sabbatical years and prophesied that four hundred and ninety years would now be given to Israel to complete the process of restoration from desolation. The nation of Israel was in violation of the law for four hundred and ninety years and now they would be on probation for four hundred and ninety years.

Third, Daniel differentiates when he is referring to weeks of days rather than weeks of years. Daniel 10:2-3 states: In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks. 3 I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all until the

entire three weeks were completed. Daniel uses another expression when he intends a definite period of days as indicated by the expression "evening and mornings" (Daniel 8:14 He said to me, "For 2,300 evenings *and* mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored."). There is no indication in Daniel 9:24-27 that he is referring to weeks of days, so a logical implication is that weeks of years are referred to in the context.

Fourth, as Harold Hoehner notes, a unit of seven years harmonizes well with Daniel 7:25 and 12:7. (Daniel 7:25: He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. Daniel 12:7: I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a *time*; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these *events* will be completed.) Hoehner argues that this unit of "time, times, and half a time," appears to be a three and one-half year period in the contexts of these passages. The seventieth week of Daniel divides into two equal parts, and each part would be three and one-half years according to this interpretation. He concludes that if the seventieth week is a unit of seven years, then the other sixty-nine weeks would also be units of seven years. This is further substantiated as the Hebrew word for "periods" represents a year in Daniel 4:16,23,25 [Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, 1979, pp. 118-19].

Therefore, having established that "weeks" refers to a seven year period, the three unit structure of Daniel 9:24-27 is understood as seven weeks or forty-nine years for the rebuilding of Jerusalem; then sixty-two weeks or four-hundred and thirty-four years until Messiah the prince; followed by one week or seven years. The first two aspects of this prophecy have already been literally fulfilled in the rebuilding of Jerusalem during the days of Nehemiah, and the coming of Jesus Christ as the Messiah for Israel. Since these two periods are not germane to the structure of the Revelation, please see my dissertation for a thorough treatment of these historical fulfillments ( The Seventieth Week of Daniel 9:27 as a Literary Key for Understanding the Structure of the Apocalypse of John, Mellen Press, 1996, pp. 49-168).

An examination of the third unit or seventieth week shows that this seven-year period is divided into two equal parts of three and one-half years (Dan. 9:27). The period begins with the coming prince (Dan. 9:26-27) who establishes a covenant with the people of Israel. This act signifies and institutes the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel's seventy week prophecy. It would appear that this covenant gives the prince some control over the sanctuary in Jerusalem. He puts a stop to the sacrifices and offerings at the midpoint of the seventieth week and institutes his own idolatrous and blasphemous sacrifices.

The prince is characterized as "one who makes desolate" (Dan. 9:27). The Hebrew participle is used four times in Daniel to describe a person who causes horror by desecrating the temple while transgressing the law of God (8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). The act of committing an abomination of desolation brings an end to the sacrifices and offerings. The abomination which is committed appears to be the offering of an idolatrous sacrifice on the altar in the temple. This would certainly be an abhorrent act to any pious believer, and cause desolation and desecration within the temple precinct.

The seventieth week concludes with God's retributive judgment on the desolater. The one who causes abomination and desolation will be destroyed. This same one who breaks the covenant with the people of Yahweh will be broken as decreed by Yahweh (Dan. 9:27).

### **A Comparison of Daniel 9:27 with the Synoptic Gospels**

A comparison of Daniel 9:27 with the Synoptic Gospels, and in particular Matthew and Mark (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14), demonstrates that the third unit of seven years was yet to be fulfilled after

the life of Jesus on earth. In this discourse (Matt. 24:1-3), Jesus was answering three questions which the disciples had posed to him: 1“ Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. 2 And He said to them, ‘Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.’ 3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’ ” In response to these three questions, Jesus taught a prophetic discourse that laid out a sequence of events that helps the reader understand when the final destruction of Jerusalem will take place; what prophetic events will lead up to His second coming; and the end of this time period. The major structural marker that is stated in the synoptics is Matthew’s reference to the abomination of desolation. Jesus had mentioned many signs which would be the “beginning of birth pangs” leading to the end of the age, also known as the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21, Mark 13:19, Luke 21:23). Jesus then stated: “Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains (Matt. 24:15-16, c.f. Mark 13:14).” The Abomination of Desolation is the major sign that Jesus gave the disciples for understanding with greater certainty that the fulfillment of this prophetic discourse would be in process. Since the Abomination of Desolation is the midpoint of the seventieth week of Daniel, the reader is given a chronological benchmark by which the synoptics can be compared to the Revelation.

### **A Comparison of the Synoptic Gospels to Revelation.**

There are three steps in the comparison of the Synoptic Gospels to the book of Revelation. The first is a comparison of Revelation 6:1-11 to the synoptics as this demonstrates thematic parallels between the "birth pangs" of the synoptics (Matt. 24:4-14; Mark 13:5-13; Luke 21:8-19) and the first six seals of the Revelation (Rev. 6:1-11). These affinities evidence chronological and structural parallels between the synoptic eschatological discourses and Revelation.

The second step is to analyze some eschatological sections in Luke (Luke 21:22-23; 23:28-31) that provide a contextual key for establishing a structural benchmark for the midpoint of Daniel's seventieth week in Revelation 6.

The third step suggests thematic and linguistic correlations between the synoptics and Revelation 7-19. These signature themes evidence the imprint of the synoptics on the content and structure of the Revelation.

### **A Comparison of Revelation 6:1-11 to the Synoptic Gospels**

The opening of the first seal calls forth a rider on a white horse (Rev. 6:1). John states: “I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer (Rev. 6:2).” This rider represents the coming of a false messiah(s) as the image is similar but deceptively different from the true Messiah, as Jesus is revealed in Revelation 19:11-16. The first sign of the synoptics, which describes the beginning of birth pangs, is the presence of pseudo-messiahs. The disciples are warned not to be deceived by men who come in the name of Jesus (Matt. 24:5; Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8). The synoptics do not state that the Antichrist is the first sign of birth pangs but rather pseudo-messiahs. It is best to view the first rider as a general symbolic reference to pseudo-messiahs who deceive the people and stir them up for war and insurrection. The rider is said to go out "conquering and to conquer," but open warfare is not present until the second seal. This may suggest that the first act of conquering is the force of political and spiritual deception and domination.

The opening of the second seal brings the rider of the red horse. The rider is given a large sword and power to take peace from the earth. The red color of the horse indicates bloodshed as men slay each other in war. The large sword is used in the Old Testament in other eschatological judgment passages (Isa. 27:1; 34:5; Ezek. 21:3). The second seal clearly parallels Matthew 24:6-7 and the synoptics: "And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom."

The breaking of the third seal brings the third rider on a black horse. He brings famine on the land. The rider holds a pair of scales in his hand. The scales were used to weigh out a measure of grain for sale. The rider proclaims: "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine" (Rev. 6:6). A denarius was a small silver coin with the approximate value of eighteen to twenty Roman cents. It was devalued in the days of Nero to about eight cents. The denarius was the standard wage for one man's work day. Famine is a common result of war. Foreign enemies would scorch the land with fire; cut down fruit-bearing trees; and salt agricultural fields in order to weaken the people in the coming years. All three synoptic writers list famine as one of the plagues following the turbulence of wars and rumors of wars (Matt. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11).

The breaking of the fourth seal brings the rider on a pale horse which is named "Death" (Rev. 6:7-8). This word can refer to physical death by various causes and fatal pestilences. The name of this plague is symbolic as one-fourth of the earth's population is killed. Hades follows closely behind the fourth rider. The implication of John may be that the people killed by this plague are God's enemies who are judged to death and a place of torment. The final instrument of death is wild beasts. The fourth seal aligns well with the synoptic gospel discourses. Famines, pestilences and death are part of the beginning of birth pangs (Matt. 24:7-8; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11).

John then sees a vision of martyrs under an altar after the fifth seal is broken (Rev. 6:9-11). Their place under the altar signifies the location where the blood of their sacrifice collects. These people are slain because of their testimony to the Word of God. The synoptics warn the disciples that persecution and martyrdom are expected during a time of tribulation (Matt. 24:9-12; Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12-19). The disciples would be hated; betrayed by family members; beaten in the synagogues and civil courts; thrown into prison and put to death.

The martyrs cry out: "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" (Rev. 6:10). This prayer is in keeping with their concept of the just demands of the law and character of God. The retribution is avenged on "the inhabitants of the earth" (Rev. 6:10). Each of the souls is given a white robe to wear. The martyrs are informed they must wait a little longer, until the slaughter is completed and their fellow servants and brothers are also killed (Rev. 6:11).

A great earthquake occurs at the breaking of the sixth seal. The motif of earthquakes is used throughout the Revelation to herald the coming judgment of God (Rev. 6:12; 8:5; 11:13, 19; 16:18). Each earthquake brings with it an intensification of judgments. The light of the sun is darkened and the illumination of the moon appears red as blood. Cosmic phenomena are common in other Old Testament prophetic works. Joel 2:30-3:3 (cf. Acts 2:19-20) records similar corresponding events of the sun and moon. The context of Joel portends the coming judgment on the nations which have been enemies of Jerusalem. The Day of Yahweh in Joel brings judgment on the nations, and deliverance and restoration to the people of Jerusalem. Stars are said to fall from the sky like ripe figs dropping from a tree. John describes the sky rolling back like a scroll, and every mountain and island is moved by the catastrophic events. The people cry for the mountains to cover them from the wrath of God. The people are said to cry out: "For the great day of their [God and the Lamb] wrath has come, and who can stand?" (Rev. 6:17). The sixth seal incorporates aspects of the synoptics from the midtribulational events and signs of the coming of the Son of Man. It will be shown later in

this article that the flight of people from persecution relates to the same timeframe as the abomination of desolation.

The celestial and terrestrial phenomena of the sixth seal are also signs of the coming of the Son of Man in the synoptics (Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24-25; Luke 21:25-26). The sixth seal reflects the Lucan account more closely as Luke includes, with the coming of the Son of Man, the aspect of men "fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world" (Luke 21:26). It appears John uses the sixth seal to introduce the beginning of the end, the "Great Tribulation," (Matt. 24:21; Mark 13:19; Luke 21:23; Rev. 6:17; 7:14), and to give the reader a glimpse of the final phase of God's eschatological judgment that has begun to fall on the whole world.

The following chart visualizes the parallels between the synoptics and seal judgments.

### Textual Parallels between the Synoptics and Seal Judgments

	Revelation	Matthew	Mark	Luke
Chapter	6	24	13	21
False Messiahs, Prophets	2	5, 11	6	8
Wars	2-4	6-7	7	9
International Discord	3-4	7	8	10
Famines	5-8	7	8	11
Pestilences	8			11
Persecution-Martyrdom	9-11	9	9-13	12-17
Earthquakes	12	7	8	11
Cosmic Phenomena	12-14			11

### The Midpoint of Daniel 9:27 in relationship to the Revelation

Luke intersperses eschatological statements throughout the closing chapters of his gospel (Luke 17:20-37; 19:41-44; 21:5-38; 23:26-31). The last disclosure of eschatological teaching (Luke 23:26-31) is set in the context of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Luke states: "And there were following Him [Jesus] a great multitude of people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him. But Jesus turning to them said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For Behold, the days are coming when they will say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed'" (Luke 23:27-29).

The phrase "For behold, the days are coming," (Luke 23:29) clearly denotes the eschatological nature of the statements that follow in the text. This phraseology is used elsewhere by Luke and the synoptic writers to introduce prophetic announcements (Luke 17:22, 26-31; 19:43; 21:22-23, 37; cf. Matt. 24:19, 22, 29; Mark 13:17, 19, 20, 24). This prophetic announcement is paradoxical in that barrenness is most often viewed in biblical writings as a curse from God rather than a blessing (Gen. 16:2; 20:17, 18; 29:32; 30:22, 23; 1 Sam. 1:6, 7; 2:1-11; Isa. 4:1; Luke 1:25). It appears the blessedness of this situation is the freedom from encumbrance that pregnancy and small children can cause during a time of flight from trouble. Luke states positively as a blessing (Luke 23:29 "For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.')

what he previously stated negatively as a warning (Luke 21:23 "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people;). Each of the synoptic writers records the negative version of this teaching: "Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days" (Matt. 24:19; Mark 13:17; Luke 21:23).

This admonition is in view of the persecution that results from the abomination of desolation and the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:15-24; Mark 13:14-23; Luke 21:20-24). The people of

Jerusalem are warned to flee to the mountains of Judea in order to protect themselves from the impending persecution. A woe is pronounced over pregnant women, and women with small children, because their flight will be impeded by their responsibilities and concerns for others. Blessed are the women who are free from these burdens because their flight will be quicker and easier. It appears that Luke has the timeframe of the destruction of Jerusalem in mind when he records this declaration (Luke 23:29, cf. 21:23).

A second event in this discourse describes the reaction of some people to the resulting tribulation: "Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us'" (Luke 23:30). The word "then" (Τότε) which can be translated "at that time", indicates the close, sequential proximity of these two events. People who flee to the mountains will cry out for the mountains and hills to hide them. Luke 23:30 may be an allusion to Isaiah 2:19 and Hosea 10:8. Isaiah 2:19 relates to a scene of men who are fleeing from the judgment and terror of Yahweh: "And men will go into caves of the rocks, and into holes of the ground before the terror of the LORD, and before the splendor of His majesty, when He arises to make the earth tremble." This judgment according to Isaiah is executed because of the idolatry of Israel (Isa. 2:12-18). The language of Hosea 10:8 is also similar: "They will say to the mountains, 'Cover us!' And to the hills, 'Fall on us!'" This prophetic oracle also concerns Yahweh's judgment of Israel because of idolatry (Hos. 10:1-8).

Luke adapts this prophetic motif and applies it to the tribulation of the destruction of Jerusalem. The resulting sequence which has a close time proximity is: 1) the abomination of desolation and siege of Jerusalem, (the midpoint of Daniel's seventieth week and the synoptic eschatological discourses); then, 2) people flee from Jerusalem to the mountains in which pregnant women have a particularly difficult time; and then, 3) some people cry out for the mountains and hills to cover them.

A comparison of Luke 23:30 with the sixth seal of Revelation 6:12-17 demonstrates a further correlation. Revelation 6:15-17 states: "And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?'" Revelation expands on this prophetic announcement by elaborating on the type of people who will cry out. Isaiah and Hosea focus on idolaters in Israel, while the Revelation amplifies the prophecy to include Gentiles from every level of society. Luke 23:30 does not explicitly state who is causing the judgment, but Revelation attributes the catastrophic judgment to the eschatological wrath of "Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:16). The synoptic gospels describe the flight of Jerusalem residents consisting primarily of Jews. The believing Jews, at least in part, will be protected by God as they flee into the wilderness (Rev. 12:6-17). Luke does not identify who cries out for the mountains and hills to cover them. The context suggests that they are Jewish people fleeing the judgment of God. Both of these passages relate back to the same Old Testament prophecies of Hosea and Isaiah. These passages provide similar but slightly different perspectives on this catastrophic time of judgment.

A further correlation with other parallel, eschatological discourses of Luke shows he also conceived of this period as a time "of great distress upon the land, and wrath to the people" (Luke 21:23). An integration of these correspondences with the synoptics would suggest the sixth seal is an expansion of the synoptic eschatological discourses, in particular, the Gospel of Luke. The proposal is that Revelation has sequentially placed the sixth seal in conjunction with the abomination of desolation without making specific reference to it in the context of Revelation 6. The prophetic sequence is: 1) the abomination of desolation and the destruction of Jerusalem at the midpoint of Daniel's seventieth week (Dan. 9:27, Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20); 2) people flee to the mountains to avoid persecution (Matt. 24:16-18; Mark 13:15-16; Luke 21:21; and 3) other people cry

for the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of God and the Lamb (Luke 23:30; Rev. 6:15-17).

A formula may help to illustrate this analogy. Logic teaches that if A=B, and B=C, and C=D, and D=E; then A=E. The argument is that each of these passages (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15-19 and Mark 13:14-17; Luke 21:20-24; Luke 23:29-31; and Rev. 6:12-17) relates to the same timeframe which is the midpoint of the Tribulation. Applying this formula to the events of these texts: if the time sequence of A: the abomination of desolation is the midpoint of the seventieth week of Daniel (Dan. 9:27); equals B: the abomination of desolation is the midpoint of the tribulation of the synoptics (Matt. 24:15-19; Mark 13:14-17); and B equals C: At this time the people flee to the mountains, and women are warned about impending dangers, (Luke 21:20-24); and the timeframe of C equals D (the people cry out for the mountains to fall on them, (Luke 23:29-31); and reference D equals E (the sixth seal of Revelation when the wrath of God and the Lamb initiate the great day of their wrath, and people cry for the mountains to fall on them, Rev. 6:12-17), then A (the abomination of desolation at the midpoint of Daniels seventieth week), equals or occurs at the same timeframe as E (the time of the sixth seal of the Apocalypse). Textual correlations that develop the expansion and chronological framework of the seventieth week of Daniel are: 1) the abomination of desolation: Daniel 9:27 equals Matthew 24:15-19, Mark 13:14-17, and Luke 21:20-24; 2) people flee from persecution: Matthew 24:15-19, Mark 13:14-17, and Luke 21:20-21 equals Luke 23:29-31; 3) people cry for the rocks to hide them: Luke 23:29-31 equals Revelation 6:12-17; therefore, 4) the midpoint of Daniel 9:27 equals Revelation 6:12-17. The texts of these passages are included below as this point to critical to understanding the chronological and sequential structure of the Revelation.

#### **A**

Daniel 9:27 “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, **but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate**, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

#### **B and C**

Matthew 24: 15 “**Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.** 17 “Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. 18 “Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. **19 “But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!**

**Mark 13:14 “But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.** 15 “The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; 16 and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. **17 “But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!**

Luke 21:20 “**But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.** 21 “**Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains,** and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; 22 because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. **23 “Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people;** 24 and they will fall by the edge of the

sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

## D

Luke 23:29 **“For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’ 30 “Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, ‘FALL ON US,’ AND TO THE HILLS, ‘COVER US.’ 31 “For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”**

## E

Revelation 6: 12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth *made* of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; **16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”**

If this correlation is correct, then a structural benchmark is established in correlating the seventieth week of Daniel with Revelation 6:12-17. The benchmark is that the sixth seal is the midpoint of Daniel's seventieth week. Revelation has amplified on this framework as expanded on by the synoptic writers in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, 23.

The first five seals have been demonstrated to be remarkably parallel and sequential to the "birth pangs" of the synoptics, therefore, it is argued that the sixth seal can be accepted as the midpoint of the seventieth week of Daniel. The cumulative parallels argue strongly for the chronological and sequential structure of Revelation. This would also suggest that further affinities between Daniel's seventieth week and the synoptics should be observed in the later portion of the judgment section of the Revelation.

### **A correlation of the Synoptics to the Revelation 7-19 within the framework of the second half of the seventieth week of Daniel**

The third step compares Revelation 7-19 with the eschatological synoptic discourses to discover further structural and literary parallels. Revelation 7:1-8 describes the sealing of 144,000 people, 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, with the "seal of the living God" (Rev. 7:2). The seal is for their protection from the plague which is about to be released on the world by the four angels who are standing at the four corners of the world. Revelation 9:4 indicates that the judgments are on the people of the world, rather than those who follow the Lamb and are sealed by God.

This section may correspond to the synoptic writers' descriptions of events which follow the flight of the people from the persecution that follows the abomination of desolation. Matthew and Mark suggest there is divine protection for some of the elect during this period: "And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short" (Matt. 24:22; Mark 13:20). An angel ascends "from the rising of the sun," and stops the plague of the four angels until the elect of God are sealed for protection (Rev. 7:2-3).

The second part of this chapter includes a vision of a great multitude from every nation and all peoples of the earth (Rev. 7:9-17). This Gentile multitude, clothed with white robes, is standing

before the throne of God and the Lamb. The white robes suggest these people are martyrs similar to those who were seen under the altar of the fifth seal (Rev. 7:9; cf. 6:9-11). They are described as those "who come out of the great tribulation," and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14). They serve in the temple of God and are protected by the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14-17).

John may be seeking by this vision to comfort the believers who are under persecution during the time of the Great Tribulation. The synoptics indicate that immediately following the abomination of desolation, great persecution and death fall on the people of Jerusalem in particular, and the rest of the world (Matt. 24:16-22; Mark 13:14-20; Luke 21:20-21). John portrays the final state of the persecuted by placing them in heaven with the Lamb. The synoptics pronounce a woe of judgment on the people of the world, while John suggests a final deliverance for those who follow the Lamb: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of the water of life; and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes" (Rev. 7:16-17). This time of unprecedented persecution on earth results in deliverance in heaven, as the cries of agony on earth become the cries of worship in heaven (Rev. 7:1-17).

John envisions a temple of God with an altar and worship taking place (11:1). He is commanded to measure the temple precinct but to "leave out the court which is outside the temple, and . . . not measure it, for it has been given to the nations, and they will tread underfoot the holy city for forty-two months" (Rev. 11:2). The Revelation appears to be paralleling a statement in Luke 21:24: "and Jerusalem [the holy city] will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

This numerical sequence of forty-two months (three and one-half years) certainly fits the argument that the Revelation is structured by the seventieth week of Daniel, as elaborated on in the synoptics, and divided into two periods of three and one-half years each. John envisions the temple being desecrated for a period of three and one-half years. This timeframe is restated in Revelation 11:3: "And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days (forty-two months or three and one-half years), clothed in sackcloth."

The two witnesses are described as two olives trees and two lampstands which are similar to the symbolism found in Zechariah 4:3-14. The witnesses are given supernatural powers to defend themselves which is reminiscent of the narratives about Elijah and Moses (Ex. 7:20; 8:1-12:32; 1 Kings 17:1; 18:41-45; 2 Kings 1:10-12). The beast that arises from the abyss makes war against them and kills them. This beast arises out of the abyss in the latter part of the Great Tribulation (Rev. 17:8) confirming that the two witnesses minister during the second half of the Tribulation. Their bodies lie dead in the streets for three and one-half days. After this time, they are resurrected and ascend to heaven. Judgment descends on the city of Jerusalem and the second woe is completed.

John introduces another series of narrative contemplations in order to establish a setting for the eschatological end (Rev. 12:1--14:20). Revelation 12:1--13:8 portrays the warriors of Satan who oppose the kingdom of God. The first vision depicts war on earth between the dragon (Satan) and the woman (Israel). The woman represents the people of Israel. Arguments in support of this view are: 1) the symbolism reflects the dream of Joseph in Genesis 37 which is a depiction of the foundation of the nation; 2) there is a symbolic reference to the birth of a manchild from the woman, and the manchild is a veiled reference to Jesus; 3) the woman flees to the wilderness for protection which corresponds to the flight of the people of Jerusalem to the mountains (Matt. 24:16-20; Mark 13:14-19; Luke 21:20-24). The correlation of protection for the woman by God for one-thousand two-hundred and sixty days is clearly a reference to the three and one-half year period of the second half of the tribulation, the second half of the seventieth week of Daniel (Rev. 12:6).

The second part of the vision depicts war in heaven (Rev. 12:7-12). The Apocalypse describes the cosmic conflict between Michael and his angels, and Satan and his angels. The

mention of Michael is reminiscent of Daniel 12:1 "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people [Israel], will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time, everyone who is found written in the book will be rescued." John signifies by this vision that Satan's end is near and deliverance for the saints will arrive.

The third aspect of this vision is the attack by Satan on the woman, Israel. The woman is able to flee to the wilderness with the aid of divine help. She is protected for "time and times and half a time," (Rev. 12:14). These events, and particularly this phrase, are reminiscent of Daniel 7:25 and 12:7. A similar beast who persecutes Israel is described by Daniel and John (Dan. 7:23-24; Rev. 12:3). Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 relate to a period of persecution that lasts for three and one-half years. John envisions the persecution of Israel lasting for three and one-half years, the time period from the committing of the abomination of desolation until the coming of the Son of Man.

In Chapter 13, the Apocalypse focuses on a beast that rises up out of the sea (Rev. 13:1-10). The description of this beast is similar to the great red dragon who persecutes the nation of Israel (Rev. 12:3; 13:1). The beast also represents a combination of beasts from Daniel 7:4-8, a leopard, bear, and lion (Rev. 13:2). The beast is fatally wounded and supernaturally healed. As a result of this miracle, the "whole earth is amazed and follows after the beast and they worship the dragon" (Rev. 13:3-4). The synoptics state: "false christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22).

The beast is given authority for forty-two months, during which he blasphemes God and makes war against the saints (Rev. 13:5-7). This is the fifth reference in Revelation to a period of three and one-half years. John portrays the abomination of desolation under the symbolism of the beast that rises up out of the sea. The language of John parallels the Lucan account as seen in the following: 1) captivity, (Rev. 13:10, cf. Luke 21:24); 2) death by the sword, (Rev. 13:10, cf. Luke 21:24); and 3) perseverance of faith, (Rev. 13:10, cf. Luke 21:19).

Another beast arises "coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon" (Rev. 13:11-18). The beast out of the earth causes the people of the earth to worship the beast out of the sea. He performs great signs and miracles with the result that he deceives "those who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 13:13-14). The Revelation envisions him giving life to a statue of the first beast. He imposes the mark of the first beast, "666" on "the people of the earth." Those who do not accept the mark of the beast are either killed or ostracized from society (Rev. 13:15-18).

The second beast represents a pseudo-prophet or pseudo-messiah. John describes him like a lamb (Rev. 13:11), an obvious parallel to Jesus, the true Lamb in the Apocalypse (Rev. 5:6-13; 7:9-17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1-10; 17:14; 19:7-9). This beast corresponds to the pseudo-prophets and pseudo-messiahs which the synoptics indicate precede the coming of the Son of Man (Matt. 24:24-26; Mark 13:21-22). The miracle of giving life or animation to the statue of the first beast seems to correlate with the view of the synoptics concerning the resurrection of Jesus, the true Messiah.

Another angel proclaims the eternal gospel to all the people of the earth and exhorts them to fear and worship God because the hour of his final judgment is coming (Rev. 14:6-7). The language of the text intensifies as the "hour of His [God's] judgment has come" (Rev. 14:7). This phrase is thematically repeated with greater intensity as the eschatological end draws near (14:15; 17:12; 18:10, 17, 19; one day, 18:8). This vision may be a parallel to Matthew 24:24: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come" (cf. Mark 13:10).

The last vision of chapter 14 pictures "one like a Son of Man," preparing to thrust a sickle of judgment into the earth (Rev. 14:14-20). This is a prelude to the second coming of Jesus to earth to bring judgment on Babylon. The symbolism represents the final stroke of God's wrath on the world. Other angels come out of the temple, one with a sharp sickle, another with fire, and they execute the

wrath of God on the earth. John takes traditional apocalyptic imagery and unfolds prophetic judgments that are similar to the synoptic gospels (Matt. 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-28).

Chapter 15 relates a sign in heaven which is the introduction to the last septet of judgments. John states that these seven angels with seven plagues: "are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished" (Rev. 15:1). This phrase echoes Revelation 10:7 where the angel of the seventh trumpet "is about to sound, the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets." These final eschatological judgments and sign correlate further with the fulfillment of the disciples' questions concerning sign of the end of the age (Matt. 24:3; Mark 13:4; Luke 21:7).

The seven bowls of the wrath of God are the most devastating of the three septets (Rev. 16). The first bowl judgment afflicts loathsome and malignant sores on those who have the mark of the beast (16:2). The second and third bowls transform the water systems of the earth into blood (Rev. 16:3-7). The interpretation of these judgments is offered by John: "O Holy One, because Thou didst judge these things; for they poured out the blood of the saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink" (Rev. 16:5-6). The next two bowls impact the sun on the earth. The fourth bowl intensifies the rays of the sun so that men are scorched by its fierce heat. The fifth bowl blocks out the light of the sun so that the kingdom of the beast is darkened. The people of the beast gnaw their tongues in pain and blaspheme God because of the tormenting sores that have been inflicted on them.

The sixth bowl dries up the Euphrates River and prepares a way for the kings from the east to invade Palestine (Rev. 16:12-16). The dragon, the beast and the false prophet; send forth three demonic spirits to deceive the kings of the world to gather at Armageddon and fight against God. The sixth bowl may be reflective of some parables which follow the synoptic eschatological discourses. Matthew suggests the coming of the Son of Man will be a time of devastation for the people of the earth (Matt. 24:36-39; cf. Luke 17:21-37). The Revelation exhorts the reader to watchfulness (Rev. 16:15) which may parallel the parabolic exhortations of: 1) the fig tree (Matt. 24:32-36; Mark 13:28-32; Luke 21:29-33); 2) the days of Noah (Matt. 24:36-39; Luke 17:26-27); 3) the watchful householder (Matt. 24:42-44; Mark 13:33-37; Luke 21:34-36); and 4) the wise servant (Matt. 24:45-51; Luke 12:42-46).

The seventh bowl announces the consummation of God's judgment (Rev. 16:17-21). A scene of unprecedented lighting, earthquakes, and hailstones announces the final catastrophic judgment of God (Rev. 16:18). The earthquakes cause worldwide destruction, particularly in the city of Babylon: "And the great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath" (Rev. 16:19).

Chapters 17 and 18 record God's judgment on Babylon the Great. Babylon is depicted in chapter 17 as a harlot who leads the nations into immorality and abominations (Rev. 17:1-7). The harlot is identified as a "great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth" (Rev. 17:18). She is seen sitting on a beast that is representative of world powers and leaders. This beast is the beast out of the sea in chapter 13 since both creatures are identified as having seven heads and ten horns (Rev. 13:1; 17:3). The harlot is depicted as a persecutor who has murdered the saints and witnesses of Jesus. This is a common motif of the Revelation as each of the beasts murders the saints of God (11:7; 12:13; 13:7, 17).

Another angel announces: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! And she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird" (Rev. 18:2). Chapter 18 focuses on the reaction of the people to the destruction of Babylon. God's vengeance is executed on Babylon because of her sensual and immoral character (Rev. 16:6-8), and murderous persecution of the saints (Rev. 16:24). In a similar thought, the synoptics maintain that the enemies of God will be destroyed at the personal appearing of the Son of Man (Matt. 24:36-41; Luke 17:26-30).

The kings, merchants, and people of the world lament the fiery destruction of the city because she is a great source of commerce and pleasure to them. The Apocalypse presents the destruction as a swift and catastrophic event that totally annihilates the city (Rev. 18:8, 10, 17, 19). The writer contrasts the reaction of the people of the world and the saints in heaven as the former group mourn the destruction while the latter rejoice because at last their blood is avenged (Rev. 18:20). Matthew emphasizes that the people of the earth will mourn the events of the personal appearing of the Son of Man (Matt. 24:30).

Chapters 17 and 18 are an apocalyptic portrayal of the final judgment recorded in the synoptic gospels, and depict the conclusion of the seventieth week of Daniel. Correlations to the synoptics include: 1) the world is filled with abominations; 2) the saints and witnesses of God are persecuted and murdered; and 3) the Son of Man returns and destroys his enemies as He delivers his elect people.

The climax of the seventieth week of Daniel and the eschatological synoptic discourses is amplified in chapter 19. The coming of the Son of Man brings vengeance on His enemies and deliverance to the elect. A great multitude in heaven proclaims "Hallelujah" to God in view of his judgments. The saints are pictured as the bride of the Lamb in contrast to the harlot of Babylon (19:7-9). John portrays the Son of Man coming out of heaven on a white horse. He is accompanied by the armies of heaven and executes judgment and war on his enemies. The beast, false prophet and people who worship the beasts are all destroyed by the power of the Lamb (19:17-21). The elect of God are delivered and the kingdom of God is established.

There are numerous thematic and linguistic parallels between the synoptic eschatological discourses and the judgment section of the Revelation. These thematic affinities demonstrate a further correlation between the Revelation and the synoptics. The succeeding chart illustrates the textual correlations that are identified in this study.

### **Textual Parallels between the Synoptics and the Apocalypse**

#### The Setting in the Temple

Rev. 4:1-5:14                      Matt. 24:1-3; Mark 13:1-4; Luke 21:1-7

#### The Beginning of Birth Pangs

Rev. 6:1-17                      Matt. 24:4-14; Mark 13:5-13; Luke 21:8-17; 23:27-31

#### Unprecedented Great Tribulation

Rev. 7:1-9:21;                      Matt. 24:21-22; Mark 13:19-20; Luke 21:18-19

#### The Abomination of Desolation and Persecution

Rev. 10:1-14:13;                      Matt. 24:15-28; Mark 13:14-23; Luke 21:20

#### Final Judgment and Personal Appearing of the Son of Man

Rev. 14:14-19:21;                      Matt. 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-28;  
Matt. 24:36-39; Luke 17:22-30

### **Summary**

The Revelation clearly evidences thematic parallels, similar content and overlaid structure with the synoptic, eschatological discourses. The first five seals patently parallel the "birth pangs" of the synoptics. These judgments follow the sequential order of all three synoptic gospels. Furthermore, the sixth seal has been shown to correlate with eschatological passages in Luke to evidence the establishment of the midpoint of Daniel's seventieth week. The cumulative testimony of thematic and linguistic affinities strongly suggests that the Revelation contains synoptic motifs in the development of the latter chapters. The Revelation amplifies on the synoptic eschatological discourses by means of apocalyptic imagery about endtime events.

This next chart manifests the structural relationships between the seventieth week of Daniel 9 and the judgment section of the Revelation. The Revelation is divided according to the correlations which are established between the seventieth week of Daniel 9, the synoptic eschatological discourses, and the content of Revelation 4-19.

### Revelation in Correlation to the Seventieth Week of Daniel

		Matt. 24:4-14; Mark 13:4-13; Luke 21:8-19	
F	D	<b>Revelation</b>	
I	A	Introduction of Seven Seals 4:1-5:14	(Beginning)
R	N	First Seal: White horse 6:1-2	
S	I	Second Seal: Red horse 6:3-4	
T	E	Third Seal: Black horse 6:5-6	
	L	Fourth Seal: Ashen horse 6:7-8	
H		Fifth Seal: Martyrs under the altar 6:9-11	
A	9	L	
F	2		
	7		
A			
<hr/>			
M		Matt. 24:15-28; Mark 14:14-23; Luke 21:20-24	
I		<b>Revelation</b>	
D		Sixth Seal: Great day of God's wrath 6:12-17	(Midpoint)
		Redeemed of God 7:1-17	
		Breaking of Seventh Seal, Seven Trumpets 8:1-6	
&		First Trumpet: 1/3 earth destroyed 8:7	
		Second Trumpet: 1/3 sea destroyed 8:8-9	
S		Third Trumpet: 1/3 water destroyed 8:10-11	
E		Fourth Trumpet: 1/3 celestial destroyed 8:12	
C		Introduction of the Three Woes 8:13	
O		Fifth Trumpet, First Woe: men tormented 9:1-12	
N		Sixth Trumpet, Second Woe: 1/3 mankind 9:13-21	
D		Little Scroll Final Judgment 10:1-11	
		Two Witnesses Persecuted and Resurrected 11:1-14	
H		The Seventh Trumpet 11:15-19	
A		A Woman, Male Child, Satan in conflict 12:1-17	
L	D	Beast out of the sea 13:1-10	
F	A	Beast out of the earth 13:11-18	
	N		
	I		
E		Matt. 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-28	
L		<b>Revelation</b>	
		Visions and Proclamations of the End 14:1-20	
F	9	Introduction: Seven Bowls 15:1-8	
I		First Bowl: malignant sores 16:1-2	(Closing Days)
N	2	Second Bowl: sea destroyed 16:3	
A	7	Third Bowl: rivers destroyed 16:4-7	
L	B	Fourth Bowl: scorching heat 16:8-9	
		Fifth Bowl: darkness 16:10-11	
D		Sixth Bowl: preparation for war 16:12-16	
A		Seventh Bowl: worldwide destruction 16:17-21	

- Y Destruction of Babylon 17:1-18:24  
S Personal Appearing of Jesus Christ 19:1-16 (Conclusion)  
Judgment: beast, false prophet, people 19:17-21

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## The Implications of the Chronological and Sequential Structure of Revelation and Synoptics

The Apostle Paul stated twice to the Church of Thessalonica that they would not experience the wrath of the Day of the Lord, but they would be delivered (and by application: all believers living at the time of the beginning of the judgment of the Day of the Lord).

1 Thessalonians 1:9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, **who rescues us from the wrath to come.**

1 Thessalonians 5:9 **For God has not destined us for wrath**, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The wrath that Paul is referring to in 1 Thessalonians is the final judgment of the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5). The wrath of God is clearly seen in Revelation 4-19. Revelation 4-6 contains the wrath and judgment of God during the first half (3 ½ years) of Daniel's seventieth week. Jesus, the Lamb and Lion of God, executes these judgments on the world. This period can be called the "Tribulation" (Matt. 24:9). Revelation 7-19 contains the wrath and judgment of God during the second half (3 ½ years) of Daniel's seventieth week. This period can be called the "Great Tribulation" (Matt. 24:15). Since the entire period of Daniel's seventieth week contains the wrath and judgment of God, the church of believers must be removed before the events of Revelation 4-19 are executed on the earth. The execution of the sixth seal brings a realization and response from the people of the world as they state: they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, **and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come**, and who is able to stand?" (Rev. 6:16-17). This structural comparison of Daniel 9:27; the synoptic, eschatological discourses (Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, 23); and Revelation clearly indicated that the Church must be removed before the Seventieth Week of Daniel begins. A final syllogism is offered: **Major premise:** The Church must be raptured prior to the divine wrath of the Day of the Lord. **Minor premise:** The entire seventieth week of Daniel involves the divine wrath of the Day of the Lord. **Conclusion:** Therefore, the Church must be raptured prior to the beginning of the seventieth week.

## Some Brief Critiques of Rapture Theories in View of the Structure of Revelation

### 1 An Examination of the Prewrath Rapture Theory

An examination of Marvin Rosenthal's structure of Revelation (Prewrath Rapture Theory) shows that he places the midpoint of the seventieth week of Daniel between the fourth and fifth seals. Rosenthal has arbitrarily move the sixth seal deep into the second half of the tribulation so that he can have more time to remove the church before the wrath of God falls on the earth. This arbitrary structure also forces Rosenthal to ignore some basic grammatical and contextual clues concerning the timing of the wrath of God. Rosenthal seeks to exploit the indefiniteness of the Greek aorist tense of Revelation 6:17 to obviate or confuse the plain understanding of the text. The pagan world under the catastrophic judgments of the sixth seal understands that "the great day of their (God and the Lamb) wrath has come, and who can stand?" (Rev. 6:17). The pagan world will make this statement on the basis of events that have taken place, not on the basis of events that will take place. The Day

of the Lord may not be proven to include the entire period of the Tribulation by this text, but it certainly includes the events beginning with the sixth seal. Furthermore, even if the Day of the Lord does not begin until the sixth seal, it does not demand that the rapture take place immediately before the sixth seal in order to be Prewrath. The context suggests that the aorist tense be understood with a past action nuance indicating that the people have recognized that the wrath of God has come.

### **Does Revelation 4:1—6:17 contain God's Judgment and Wrath?**

A further question to be asked in relationship to the Prewrath Rapture theory is whether or not Revelation 4-6:11 should also be included as part of God's tribulation judgment of wrath on the world. It was demonstrated previously in this study that the first half of Daniel's seventieth week should be described or titled "The Tribulation." The fact that there is tribulation during this time suggests the removal of the Church before this timeframe. Rosenthal understands the problem of the presence of the Church in the midst of tribulation that is initiated by God. This problem contradicts his placement of his Prewrath rapture in Revelation 8. He writes: ... pretribulationism suggests that in the book of Revelation it is the Lamb of God who takes the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sits upon the throne (Rev. 5:6-7). The scroll, as it is opened, brings to fruition the seventieth week of Daniel. Since it is the Lamb alone who had the right to open the scroll and loose the seals thereof (Rev. 5:9), the entire tribulation period is the outpouring of His wrath. This argument totally ignores the distinction between God's active will and permissive will, both of which are equally under His sovereign control (The Prewrath Rapture of the Church, p. 143).

Rosenthal goes on to suggest that since the first five seals are committed by the agency of man, therefore, the seals are not a part of God's judgment. This logic sets up an artificial principle of interpretation that ignores the plain teaching of God's control and execution of events throughout the Revelation. One example is found in the destruction of the Harlot of Babylon (Rev. 17-18). This judgment is the will of God but it is carried out by the forces of the Beast: "And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be fulfilled (Rev. 17:17-18).

A second line of evidence is that Jesus Christ is the One Who breaks the seals and initiates the judgments (Rev. 6). Christ begins the process of establishing His rule on earth in which mankind will honor Him (Rev. 5). John 5:22-23, 27 states: "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. . . . and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man" (See also Daniel 7:13-14). The implication is clear: the Church must be removed before the seal judgments because the seals contain God's judgment as executed by Jesus Christ during the Tribulation.

A third line of evidence that Revelation 4-5 contain the judgment of God is the cosmic phenomenon that issues forth from the throne of God. Each of the septet judgments: seals, trumpets, bowls, as well as other plagues, are preceded by the execution of cosmic phenomenon such as lightning, thunder, and earthquakes which come forth from the throne of God (Rev. 4:5; 6:12-14; 8:5; 11:19; 15:8; 16:18). This cosmic phenomenon signals the outpouring of God's judgment on the world. These judgments are filled with His wrath and bring devastating destruction. This cosmic phenomenon signals God's judgment prior to the breaking of the seals which are part of the Tribulation. If the rapture of the Church is defined as pre-wrath, which is biblically and theologically correct, then the Church must be removed prior to the beginning of God's judgment in Revelation 4.

The final line of evidence that Revelation 4:1-6:17 contains the judgment of God is the fact that the seal judgments are characteristic of God's wrath in other biblical passages. Ezekiel 14:21 is an example of judgments from God that are similar to the first five seals: "For thus says the Lord God,

How much more when I send My four severe judgments against Jerusalem: sword, famine, wild beasts, and plague to cut off man and beast from it." (See also passages like Leviticus 26:22-25; Deuteronomy 28:21-25; Jeremiah 15:2-4; 16:4; Ezekiel 5:12-17 for further examples of cosmic catastrophes which parallel the five seals and are characteristic of God's wrath.)

Let us go back to Rosenthal's basic thesis: the rapture must precede the wrath of God. But how do we define the wrath of God. A comparison of Ephesians 5:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 5:9; with 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 provides an equivalent definition. Ephesians 5:6 states: "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the **wrath** of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." 2 Thessalonians 1:5-8 states as a result of the persecution of the Thessalonians that: "This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment . . . For after all it is only just for God to repay with **affliction** those who **afflict** you, and to give relief to you who are **afflicted** and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out **retribution** to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus." The concept of wrath should not be restricted to a definition that does not also incorporate **tribulation and/or affliction**. Wrath is understood as a parallel term to affliction in these two passages.

Luke 21:23 and the synoptic accounts, in the context of a midtribulational timeframe, provides another parallel: "Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great **distress** (Luke 21:23, distress; Matt. 24:21 and Mark 13:19, tribulation), upon the land, and **wrath** to this people." These parallels indicate that the wrath of God involves tribulation. Tribulation is an essential part of God's wrath. 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9 clearly state that God has not appointed believers to **wrath**.

It has been previously shown in this paper that the first half, and even the entire seven years of Daniel's seventieth week, should be designated as "The Tribulation," or "A Time of Tribulation." The second half is certainly "The Great Tribulation." Revelation 4-19, which spans the seventieth week of Daniel, contains the judgment of God, i.e. His tribulation and wrath. Therefore, the Church must be removed before the seventieth week of Daniel, which is elaborated on in Revelation 4-19. (For additional arguments critiquing the Prewrath Rapture, see my article in Bibliotheca Sacra Vol. 148, #592 pp. 387-98: Another Look at Rosenthal's Pre-Wrath Rapture).

## 2 An Examination of a Midtribulational Rapture Theory

A major advocate of the midtribulational or mid-seventieth week rapture theory has been Gleason L. Archer. He argues for a midtribulational rapture that takes place in Revelation 14:14-16 (Three views of the Rapture, pp. 142-45). Archer confuses the spiritual nature of people in Revelation 14:6 by referring to this group as "true believers in every kindred, nation, and tribe." The group is described as "those who live on the earth." This phrase is better understood as referring to unbelievers. The phrase is used in Revelation 3:10 and 11:10 to refer to unbelievers. The angel is said to preach an eternal gospel to these people, hardly a message that is needed for "true believers." His misunderstanding continues through Revelation 14, resulting in an illogical conclusion. He writes: "This (a declaration of the coming of the Armageddon judgment) should alert us to the fact that John does not follow a neatly segmented chronological sequence in the series of visions revealed to him, but rather, there is occasional overlap or preliminary anticipation from time to time, which is taken up again and brought to its conclusion later in the book (p. 143)."

The fact that Revelation offers the reader narrative synopses and previews to highlight and focus on important events and people does not dictate that the book is without chronological and sequential structure. Archer's placement of the rapture in chapter fourteen forces the expositor to reshuffle the chapters like a deck of cards so that the desired chronology is established. It seems better to recognize the previously argued structure, accept the sixth seal as the midpoint, and

chapters seven through nineteen as referring to the second half of the tribulation. A rapture in Revelation 14 would force an author to a late tribulational viewpoint rather than midtribulational position.

The language of Revelation 14:14-16 relates more to judgment than deliverance. The phrase "harvest of the earth" is used by Jeremiah to refer to the final judgment of Babylon (Jer. 51:33), and by Matthew to refer to the final judgment of the world at the second coming of Jesus Christ (Matt. 13:39-41). A proper understanding of Revelation 14 sees the chapter as a prelude to the final execution of the seven bowl judgments which finish the wrath of God on Babylon and the world.

J. Oliver Buswell Jr. argues that the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15-19) is the midtribulational point of the Revelation (A Systematic Theology of the Christian Church, Vol. 2. p. 397). He equates this with the last trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52. This arbitrary, cross reference association, should be abandoned in light of a clearer understanding of the structure of Revelation. The seventh trumpet is executed sometime later in the second half of the tribulation. This means that Buswell's cross reference correlation would result in a Rapture that was later during the Great Tribulation. There is no exegetical evidence to relate 1 Corinthians 15:52 to the seventh trumpet judgment. The seventh trumpet, which results in the seven bowl judgments, probably takes place during the last few weeks of the Great Tribulation since the results of these judgments leaves the earth in an uninhabitable state. A midtribulational seventh trumpet is not sequentially possible according to my previously argued structure.

### **3 An Examination of a Posttribulational Rapture Position**

Douglas Moo is a proponent of a posttribulational rapture position. He places the rapture of the church in Revelation 11 (Three Views on the Rapture, pp. 171-211). He argues: "Of more significance is the depiction of events in chapter 11. Although there are many details that are obscure in this chapter it seems reasonably clear that 11:11-12 describes the resurrection of the two witnesses. Does this resurrection have anything to do with the Rapture? The fact that the two are said to go up "in a cloud" may suggest this, for clouds are consistently mentioned in descriptions of the Rapture (cf. Matt. 24:30; Acts 1:9; 1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 14:14). And, as elsewhere when the Rapture is mentioned, a trumpet is found in this text (11:15) [p. 198]."

The problem that Moo faces is explaining the details of the rest of the chapter as well as the chronological indicators. These two witnesses are said to prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days (Rev. 11:3). Their bodies lie in the streets for three and one-half days (Rev. 11:9). This forces the posttribulational rapture to a point after the end of the seventieth week and well after the wrath of God is released under the seal judgments. The judgment that results from their death is the conclusion of the second woe (Rev. 11:14). The second woe is chronologically part of a three woe sequence that parallels with the fifth, sixth and seventh trumpets. The placement of the rapture in Revelation 11 forces a displacement of the sequential nature of the septet judgments as demonstrated earlier in this paper. Moo must rearrange the chronological and sequential nature of Revelation in order to fit his posttribulational viewpoint. Moo writes: "...the structure of the text itself demonstrates that the 'abomination of desolation' probably refers to an event at the end of the age—almost certainly the usurpation of God's position by the Antichrist (p. 192)." Moo is incorrect as the abomination of desolation clearly happens at the midpoint of the tribulation in alignment with the sixth seal judgment. Even if the abomination of desolation could be moved later into the second half of the tribulation, the timeframe of the judgments would need to be at least one-year prior to the Second Coming of Christ, since the fifth trumpet is five months in duration.

Moo appeals to the structure of Revelation as part of his posttribulational argument. He writes: "We conclude our discussion of the Revelation by attempting to indicate how our understanding of particular events in the Revelation fits into the overall structure of the book. It seems clear that the

seventh in each series of seals, trumpets, and bowls brings us to the time of the Parousia (p. 203).” Although it may seem clear to Moo, he provides little argumentation for the structure. He offers the following structural chart for Revelation.

## STRUCTURE OF REVELATION (p.204)

Seals	Trumpets	12-14	Bowls	17-19:10
1				
2				
3	1			
	2			
4	3	(12-13)		
	4		1	
5	5		2	
			3	
	6		4	
			5	
			6	
Vision of Redeemed (7:9-17)	Resurrection (11:11-12)	14:1-5 Redeemed 14:14-20 Rapture Resurrection, Judgment		Proclamation of Judgment and Salvation
			7	
7	7	PAROUSIA (19:11-21) Binding of Satan First Resurrection Millennium Eternal State		

It appears that Moo supports a simultaneous view of the septet judgments, which has been shown previously in this paper to be untenable. He fails to understand how Revelation 4 and 5 are a prelude that leads to the judgments of Revelation 6-19. He embraces all of the exegetical problems of Gleason Archer by also trying to posit the rapture in Revelation 14:14-20. Notice that Moo places the sixth element of each septet in parallel with the others. This is done so that he can arrange other passages that he suggests refer to Christ's Parousia in a parallel, chronological order. Moo forces the structure of Revelation into a displaced order to support his posttribulation view. This structure disregards the many textual clues that demonstrate the chronological and sequential order of the entire book of Revelation. Moo needs to explain why he has disrupted the natural order of Revelation since he has moved the chapters out of their literary sequence. He also must explain why the seventh seal does not constitute the seven trumpets, and why the seventh trumpet does not constitute the seven bowls. Finally, Moo must explain why his structure contains so many judgments that execute the wrath of God on the earth when the church is present, when the church has been promised that "God has not destined you to wrath" (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9).

Robert Gundry understands this predicament of removing the church prior to the wrath of God. In his posttribulational understanding of the Revelation, he piles up the wrath judgments at the end of the seventieth week. He argues: "The universally acknowledged Semitic style of Revelation favors the second view (concurrent judgments piled up at the end), according to which the seals, trumpets, and bowls will find somewhat concurrent fulfillment. . . . Chronologically, the apocalyptic visions dart back and forth with swiftness that sometimes bewilders our Western minds (Robert Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, p. 75)."

The acceptance of Semitic style doesn't necessitate bewilderment on the part of the reader or lack of sequential structure within the literary product. Gundry's view at best is a late tribulational view since he must allow at least six months for the execution of the trumpets with the fifth trumpet being five months in duration. Gundry faces the difficulty of every posttribulational writer in that the seventieth week of Daniel, as fulfilled in Revelation 4-19, contains the wrath and tribulation of God throughout its contents.

The problems that Moo and Gundry create with this artificial structure of Revelation can easily be solved by accepting the chronological and sequential structure of Revelation in the context of a pre-seventieth week Rapture. There is no need to reshuffle the chapters so as to support a posttribulational viewpoint.

## **Conclusion**

A prewrath rapture must be pre-seventieth week, or what has been historically understood as pretribulational. The wrath of God begins in Revelation 4-5 with the preparatory vision of the judgment throne of God. Jesus Christ executes the wrath of God by breaking the seal judgments. The first five seals are part of the first-half of the seven year Tribulation (Rev. 6). The sixth seal is the transitional midpoint at the time of the execution of the abomination of desolation. The seventh seal, which is the seven trumpets and seven bowl judgments (Rev. 8-18), continues the intensity of God's wrath through the second half, which is the Great Tribulation, until the coming of Jesus Christ in Revelation 19. Only a pre-seventieth week or pretribulational rapture can consistently fulfill the promises of 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9 that the church is removed from the wrath of God.