**The Time of the End**

**A Study About the Book of Revelation**

Arlen L. Chitwood

[www.lampbroadcast.org](http://www.lampbroadcast.org)

Chapter Fifteen

The Great Seismos

*I looked when He opened the sixth seal*, *and behold*, *there was a great earthquake*; *and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair*, *and the moon became like blood*.

*And the stars of heaven fell to the earth*, *as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind*.

*Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up*, *and every mountain and island was moved out of its place*.

*And the kings of the earth*, *the great men*, *the rich men*, *the commanders*, *the mighty men*, *every slave and every free man*, *hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains*,

*and said to the mountains and rocks*, “*Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb*!

*For the great day of His wrath has come*, *and who is able to stand*?” (**Revelation 6:12-17**).

It is evident that the breaking of the first four seals of the seven-sealed scroll provides an overall word picture — presenting just the main, necessary facts — of the complete seven-year Tribulation, along with events immediately following Christ’s return at the end of the Tribulation. That which is seen when the four horsemen ride forth, one after the other as each of the first four seals are broken, provides an overall description of an interrelated succession of events that will mark these few final years of Man’s Day. In this respect, the whole of that which is seen by and through the breaking of these first four seals (**6:1-8**) could be viewed as *a skeletal framework* for that which is seen in the remainder of the book covering this period of time (**6:9-19:21**).

Everything beyond this point (that which is revealed when the remaining three seals are broken [which includes that which is revealed when the seven trumpets are sounded and the corresponding seven bowls are poured out, seen in chapters **6b**, **8-10**, **11b**, **15**, **16**], along with all of the asides [events seen in chapters **7**, **11a**, **12-14**, **17-19**]) provides the details and commentary for *the complete skeletal picture* seen by and through the breaking of the first four seals. This complete sequence of events provides *the sinews*, *flesh*, *and skin* to cover the initial skeletal framework.

In this respect, when an individual begins with the breaking of the first seal in chapter **six** and continues through chapter **nineteen** — with the completion of the judgment of the great whore, Christ’s subsequent return, and the destruction of Gentile world power — that individual has read a detailed word picture covering the overall scope of the coming seven-year Tribulation and events that immediately follow, leading into the Messianic Era. That individual has read the matter *exactly* as God gave it and *exactly* as God wants man to see and understand it in this closing book of Scripture.

God though would expect man to see and understand this part of His Word *exactly* as He would expect man to see and understand any other part of His Word — *not only in the light of all that He has revealed but also in the light of the way in which He has revealed matters*, *beginning with Moses*.

But, bear something in mind. As in any other part of Scripture, God, in this book, has structured His Word *after a particular fashion*. At the beginning of Scripture, God’s structural method, along with providing history, was centrally *typical*, *in conjunction with numbers and metaphors*. In the closing book of Scripture, in the book of **Revelation**, God’s structural method is clearly stated at the beginning of the book:

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, *which God gave Him to show His servants* — *things which must shortly take place*. *And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John*. (**1:1**).

And this revealed method (“signified”) is seen throughout the book, often *in conjunction with numbers and metaphors* (ref. Chapter 1 in this book).

The preceding is what many expositors and Bible students have overlooked and have not taken into account when trying to understand that which is revealed in this book, particularly when the sixth seal is broken. They have overlooked and not taken into account the word “*signified*” in the opening verse of the book, which has to do with using *indirect or illustrative language in order to bring out that which is direct or explanatory*. And attempting to understand and interpret this book after a manner other than how God gave this part of His Word not only leads to all types of problems but it closes the door to the true picture of the matter, to that which God has revealed through the means that He has used.

The whole of that which is revealed when the sixth seal is broken is set forth in illustrative language (which was used extensively in that which is revealed by and through the breaking of the first five seals), and it is quite evident that metaphors are being used throughout. And, viewing the matter both textually and contextually, it is a simple matter to see and understand the exact nature of the subject matter being dealt with by and through this means.

First, to understand that which is illustrative language is being used in this part of Scripture, begin with the word “*earthquake*” (**6:12**), which is the first thing mentioned when this sixth seal is broken. This word in the Greek text is *seismos*, which means “to shake,” “to agitate,” “to stir up.”

The word “earth” is not associated with the word *seismos*. That would have to be derived from the text or context. And, in this case, the entire passage has to do with *things in heaven*, *heaven itself*, *and things on earth*. There is a great shaking of *things* *in heaven* (“*the sun*,” “*the moon*,” and “*the stars*”), *heaven itself*, and *things* *on earth* (“*every mountain and island*”).

(Our English words “seismic,” “seismology,” “seismograph” and other forms of the same word are all derived [in all or in part] from the Greek word, *seismos.* Most words in this family of words in the English language are associated with earthquakes; but the words, in and of themselves, as in the Greek, have no relation to *the earth* per se [note a cognate form of *seismos* in v. **13** (*seio*), translated “shaken”].  *The earth* is something added to *the shaking or agitation*, completely apart from the actual meaning of the different words derived from *seismos* [e.g., “earth” prefixed to “quake,” *earth-seismic,* “earthquake”].)

Then note that which occurs by and through this great shaking of things in heaven, heaven itself, and things on earth.  *The sun* becomes “*black as sackcloth of hair*,” *the moon* becomes “*as blood*,” *the stars* fall from heaven “*to the earth*,” *the heaven* departs (is removed, in the sense of being rolled up [cf. **Isaiah 34:4**]), “*as a scroll when it is rolled up*,” and *every mountain and island* are ”*moved out of its place*.”

Attempting to see this as literal, apart from illustrative means and metaphors, would present major problems at every turn. Note possibly the greatest of the problems — “*the stars*” *falling from heaven to the earth.* The size of stars, the heat generated by stars, and their distance from the earth would prohibit even the thought of such literally occurring.

Stars are much larger than the earth. Our sun, for example, is a medium-sized star, and the diameter of the sun is over one hundred times that of the earth. If a literal star ever “*fell to the earth*,” the earth would be burned to a cinder long before the star ever reached the earth.

Aside from the preceding, the nearest star to the earth (other than the sun) is Alpha Centauri, and this star is over four light years removed from the earth (about twenty-five trillion miles away); but most stars are thousands of light years removed, and there are multiplied billions of them in our galaxy (an estimated two to four hundred billion).

In fact, the distance from the earth to stars in the galaxy, for the most part, is so great that what man sees when he gazes into the heavens at night is light from distant stars that began traveling toward earth before man was even created, possibly even before Satan fell, at a speed slightly over 186,000 miles per second. And that light is just now reaching the earth. In fact, a scattering of these stars have likely not even existed for centuries or millennia, with their nova yet to be seen (possibly not being seen until sometime during the Millennium, or the ages following).

And similar things, though in a different sense, could be said about that which happens to *the sun*, *the moon*, *the heaven itself, and the mountains and islands* when the sixth seal is broken. All is *illustrative and metaphorical*, and the whole of the passage must be understood after this fashion, in keeping with the way God has not only designed His Word in this book but also in keeping with the way God views these different objects when using them as metaphors.

The Great Shaking

This *great disarray* of that which is being referenced, described by and through the use of heavenly bodies, heaven itself, and geographical places on earth, covers *the complete spectrum* of the matter. And that which is seen by and through this means when the sixth seal is broken provides further information, commentary, for that which is seen when the first four seals were broken.

That which is seen when these four seals were broken presented a man gaining governmental control over the earth (first seal). This was then followed by a progressive deterioration of conditions on earth unparalleled in the history of man (second, third, and fourth seals), which is seen *directly connected with the government of the earth from the first seal*.

And that which is seen when the sixth seal is broken brings the whole matter to *a time near and at its climax* (near the end of the Tribulation and immediately following Christ’s return after the Tribulation [ref. subsequent material in this chapter]). Graphically described, that which is seen when this seal is broken has to do with *a complete disarray and collapse of the government of the earth* — the government in existence after the rider on the white horse had become world ruler and had been instrumental in bringing to pass that which is seen after the second, third, and fourth seals had been broken.

Then, viewing the matter from the standpoint of that which is seen when the fifth seal was broken (souls under the altar), that brought to pass when the sixth seal is subsequently broken *addresses the cry of the martyrs seen under the altar:*

*How long*, *O Lord*, *holy and true*, *until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth*? (**6:10b**; cf. **Genesis 9:6**).

There is also considerable commentary numerous places in the Old Testament that bears directly upon that which is brought to pass when the sixth seal is broken (numerous types, that which are seen in Daniel, etc.).

(E.g., parts of the Old Testament that deal with that which is seen when the sixth seal is broken would be sections such as events leading to the power of Egypt being brought to naught during Moses’ Day, events leading to Haman and his ten sons being impaled on a gallows during Esther’s day, or events leading to “*the little horn*,” “*the prince of the covenant*,” being brought to his end in Daniel’s prophecy.)

In short, as previously seen, that which is brought to pass by and through the imagery used when the sixth seal is broken depicts *the complete breakdown of the final form of Gentile world power*, *immediately prior to its destruction*. The destruction of the final form of Gentile world power is seen later in the book (chapters **8**, **9**, **14b**, **19b**), and that which occurs when the sixth seal is broken sets the stage for this subsequent destruction.

1) The Powers of Nature

There is a great shaking of natural things connected with the earth, both *in heaven* and *on earth* — the sun, moon, and stars in heaven, heaven itself, and the mountains and islands on earth.

a) The Sun

*The sun*, the first thing mentioned among this array of things in heaven and on earth, can only be depicting *the supreme governing authority* ­— “*the heavens do rule*” (**Genesis 37:9**; **Daniel 4:26**; **Revelation 12:1**). All (the moon, stars [in the sense used here], and the mountains and islands) *are dependent on* light from the sun. And the sun is *darkened*. The sun becomes “*black as sackcloth of hair*.”

*Sackcloth* was a coarse-textured cloth, often made from goat’s hair or black hair from camels. Being clothed in sackcloth was a symbol of *despair or calamity* (**Genesis 37:34**; **Esther 4:1-4**; **Isaiah 50:3**; **Ezekiel 7:18**). In the imagery used, **Revelation 6:12** depicts the sun, as it were, being clothed with this black, coarse-textured cloth, *blotting out all light*, with the added thought of *despair or* *calamity*.

And this is not seen as a passing eclipse. Rather, this portrays conditions at a terminal point. This portrays the way that the government of the earth will exist at the end of Man’s Day. The “*prince of the covenant*,” *seated on Satan’s throne* and possessing “*power* . . . *and great authority*” (**Revelation 13:2**), will have carried the government, in a downward spiral, to this point (cf. **Joel** **2:2**, **10**, **30**, **31**).

b) The Moon

The “*moon*,” the next thing mentioned, is *a secondary heavenly body in relation to the sun*. The moon derives its light from the sun; and in the sense of depicting governing authority, this secondary authority, dependent on the supreme authority, would be darkened as well, with this darkness described through another means — the moon becoming “*as blood*.”

“Blood,” in Scripture, has to do with both *life* and *death*. In **Leviticus 17:11**, *life* is said to be in “*the blood*.” But, in **Exodus 12:7**, viewing the other side of the matter, blood from a slain lamb placed on the doorposts and lintel of an Israeli home showed *death* (though this resulted in *life* because of that which is stated in **Leviticus 17:11**).

The blood on the doorposts and lintel showed *that death had occurred inside that Israeli home*. The blood showed that *the firstborn had already died*, *though vicariously*. When the Lord passed through the land of Egypt at midnight and saw the blood, He was satisfied; and, consequently, He passed over that house.

Thus, the thought of “blood” could be used either way — *life*, or *death*.

But the manner in which “blood” is used in **Revelation 6:12**, where the moon becomes “*as blood*” in connection with the sun becoming “*black as sackcloth of hair*,” the thought could only have to do with *death*.The moon, dependent on the sun, is seen being blackened as well, though the matter is expressed a different way. Where there had previously been “light,” now there was *darkness*; where there had previously been “life,” now there was *death*.

c) The Stars

The “*stars*” of heaven, the remaining heavenly bodies mentioned, could only depict *secondary powers connected with the primary and secondary authority*, *the sun and the moon* (cf. **Job 38:7**; **Isaiah 14:13**; **Revelation 12:4**). And the sun being darkened would affect the stars (in the sense that they are used here) exactly as it had affected the moon.

And a different way of stating that which has happened is used again. First, to describe matters at hand, *there was a calamitous blackness*, *and then death*.Now, continuing the description, “*the stars*” are seen *falling* from heaven to the earth.

d) The Mountains and Islands

Then “*mountains and islands*” are the last objects used in this depiction of *a complete breakdown of powers and authorities*. A “mountain” in Scripture, when used in the sense seen here, depicts *a kingdom* (**Isaiah 2:1-5**; **Jeremiah 51:25**; **Daniel 2:44**, **45**; **Matthew 17:1-5**); and, contextually, an “island” would be connected with the government but more in the sense of *a center of trade and commerce* (**Isaiah 23:2**; **Ezekiel 27:3ff**;cf. **Revelation 18:11ff**).

They (all of the mountains and islands) are seen being “*moved out of their places*.” Not only is there *a calamitous blackness*, *death*, *and a falling*, but there is also *a removal*, *dislodging*, *and displacement of everything*.

“. . . *I will shake* *heaven and earth*.

*I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms*. . . .” (**Haggai 2:21b**, **22a**).

2) The End Result of Going Forth “*conquering and to conquer*” (**Revelation 6:2**)

The government of the earth at the end of Man’s Day is vividly described when the sixth seal is opened. Then those having some type of connection with the government are seen (which, in the text, includes *everyone*).

That which is seen when the sixth seal is broken depicts *a complete breakdown of the whole matter — the government of the earth and that which is connected with the government*. The fabric holding the system together unravels, apparently quite rapidly. *Disorder*, *in that day*, *will reign supreme*.

When everything unravels and disorder reigns supreme, the attitude of those on the earth comes into view. *All* — “the *kings of the earth*, *the great men*, *the rich men*, *the commanders*, *the mighty men*, *every slave and every free man*” (v. **15a**) — will be affected by this total collapse of the government and all the things that appertain thereunto, *resulting in utter chaos*.

And these same individuals will seek help through one means. They will hide themselves “*in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains*” (v. **15b**), saying to “*the mountains and rocks*,”

. . . *Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb*!

*For the great day of His wrath has come*, *and who is able to stand*? (vv. **16b**, **17**)

The “*caves*” and “*rocks of the mountains*,” as in that which precedes, are used in metaphorical senses. Hiding themselves in the places described and looking to these places as possibly some type of sanctuary or shield from that which is occurring could only have to do with seeking some type help or aid from a government in complete disarray (“*caves*” and “*rocks*” [safe places] “*of the mountains*” [of the world kingdoms]). And, of course, no help or aid will be found.

But the matter in that day will be as it has always been — *under the complete control of the God of heaven*. He has stayed His hand for a time, allowing man’s *cup of iniquity* to become “*complete*” (cf. **Genesis 15:16**). He has allowed Satan to continue exercising control, and He will allow the coming Antichrist, under Satan, to bring mankind to the brink of annihilation (**Matthew 24:21**, **22**). Then things will begin to change rapidly. “The *great day of His* [God’s] *wrath*” (**Revelation 6:17**) *will be at hand*.

In that day God will no longer stay his hand. God will, again, step into man’s affairs during Man’s Day; and man, when that day arrives, *will be unable to do anything whatsoever about the matter* (cf. **Revelation 9:6**).

Men on the earth in that day will seek to distance themselves from that which is happening. But they will be unable to do so.

*There will be no escape*.

3) The Time during Which the Preceding Will Occur

The complete breakdown, disarray, and collapse of the earth’s government under Satan, his angels, and the nations will be followed by *a complete change in the government of the earth*. And man can’t do anything to either hasten that day or move that day far into the future.

God works with *set times* that He Himself has established; and, “*It is written* . . . .”

The judgments of the sixth seal are seen in connection with *the heavens being opened*, *with regality*, *and with the great day of God*’*s wrath* (vv. **14-17**). *The great day of God*’*s wrath*, contextually, can only refer to “*the great and the terrible day of the Lord*” seen over and over in Joel, which, contextually in Joel, occurs in connection with *judgments at the end of the Tribulation following Christ*’*s return* (cf. **Joel 1:15**; **2:1**, **2**, **11**, **31**; **3:1-16**; **Revelation 11:18**; **19:15**).

Christ’s return at the end of the Tribulation to effect a change in the government by and through these judgments is seen in *three different places in that section of the book covering the Tribulation and the time immediately beyond* (chapters **6-19**). It is seen in chapter **six** (vv. **14-17**), in chapter **fourteen** (vv. **14-20**), and in chapter **nineteen** (vv. **11-21**).

(As explained and dealt with in different places in this book [The Time of the End; ref. also the author’s books, Coming in His Kingdom and Moses and John, Chapter 2, “Exodus and Revelation”], the book of Revelation, rather than being written in a strict chronological order, is structured like the rest of Scripture. A complete panorama of events is given, followed by commentary. And this structure is repeated time after time throughout the book.

Scripture begins this way in **Genesis**, and it ends this way in **Revelation**. Thus, it would only be natural to see Christ’s return dealt with more than one place in the book, followed by commentary each time.

The same thing was previously seen regarding the removal of Christians at the end of the dispensation [i.e., the rapture]. This same removal was seen in both chapter **one** and chapter **four** [**1:10**, **11**; **4:1**, **2**], with commentary following in each instance [ref. Chapters 4, 7 in this book].)

Christ will return in connection with judgments occurring at the time of or immediately following the breaking of the sixth seal of the seven-sealed scroll. And in line with the preceding, judgments occurring after the seventh seal has been broken will occur *following Christ*’*s return but preceding the Messianic Era*.

Thus, all of the judgments seen when the seven trumpets sound and the seven bowls are poured out will occur *following the Tribulation after Christ returns to the earth*, for these are the judgments seen occurring when the seventh seal is broken. And these judgments will bring all the judgments of the seven-sealed scroll to an end, *effecting the redemption of the inheritance*.

Structure of the Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls

The judgments revealed when the seventh seal is broken (the trumpet and bowl judgments) fit into and form commentary, providing additional information, for that which is previously seen when the first six seals of the scroll were broken.

They would reflect back on that seen when the sixth seal was broken, which answers the cry of the martyrs when the fifth seal was broken. In this respect, these judgments, along with the judgments that are seen when the fifth and sixth seals were broken, form part of the sinews, flesh, and skin to cloth the skeletal framework originally set forth by and through that which is revealed by the four horsemen riding forth when the first four seals of the scroll were broken.

And when the seventh seal is broken, the matter, as previously stated, is brought to *a full end* with the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the corresponding pouring out of the seventh bowl.

Note how this is seen in that stated about the angel with the seventh trumpet:

*The angel* [the angel with the seventh trumpet] *whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand* [lit., “right hand”] *to heaven*

*and swore by Him who lives forever and ever*, *who created heaven and the things that are in it*, *the earth and the things that are in it*, *and the sea and the things that are in it*, *that there should be delay no longer*,

*but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel*, *when he is about to sound*, *the mystery of God would be finished*, *as He declared to His servants the prophets*.

(**Revelation 10:5-7**)

*Then the seventh angel sounded*: *And there were loud voices in heaven*, *saying*, “*The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ* [lit., ‘The kingdom of this world is become that of our Lord, and of His Christ’], *and He shall reign forever and ever*!” (**Revelation 11:15**)

Then note how this is seen in that stated about the angel with the seventh vial:

*Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air*, *and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven*, *from the throne*, *saying*, “*It is done* [lit., ‘It has been completed,’ ‘It has come to pass’]!” (**Revelation 16:17**)

(Ref. Chapter 19 in this book, pp. 235, 236, for comments on “time” in relation to *finality* in **Revelation 10:6**. Also, see Chapter 11 in this book, pp. 133, 134, for comments on “the mystery of God” being *finished* in **Revelation 10:7**, along with the statement having to do with *completion* in **Revelation 16:17**.)

Though the seals, trumpets, and bowls are presented in a separate sense in the book of **Revelation**, forming three triads of sevens — *showing divine perfection* [*three*] *within God*’*s complete judgment* [*seven*] *surrounding the redemption of the inheritance* — as previously seen, an inseparable relationship exists between all of the judgments. And *everything moves toward revealed goals*, *ultimately allowing God’s Son to take the kingdom and to reign*.

These revealed goals would encompass:

1. Bringing about the redemption of the inheritance, allowing God’s Son to take the kingdom.
2. Bringing to pass the marriage of Christ to His previously revealed bride, allowing the Son to possess a wife — a requirement for reigning in the kingdom of men, for man cannot reign alone; he must reign as a complete being.
3. Bringing Israel to the place of repentance, resulting in the restoration of the nation (spiritually, and to the land), God again taking Israel as His wife, and the restoration of the theocracy to the nation.
4. Bringing Gentile world power to naught, resulting in an end to the Times of the Gentiles.
5. Bringing about that which is seen in **Psalm 2:6** — “*Yet I have set My King on My holy* *hill of Zion*.”