

Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775
Eugene, Oregon 97440
www.cogeternal.org

The late Raymond C. Cole
Founding Pastor
Jon W. Brisby
Pastor, Director

Offices in:
United States
Philippines
Switzerland

A Survey of the Day of the Lord—Part I Edited Transcript

Jon W. Brisby; 9-11-99

Because I have been going through a lot of old material in preparation for the Feast sermons on the basics and the fundamental doctrines, and the heart and core of the things that were originally taught by Mr. Armstrong, I also had an opportunity to run across other material that I thought applied very well to today: the Feast of Trumpets and what the Feast of Trumpets is all about. And I debated whether I would tackle this subject the way I'm going to try to today, because it's a lot of material. But, at the same time, I thought, there is no more important way to describe the reality of what the Feast of Trumpets is all about than to do a focus on the book of Revelation.

The Feast of Trumpets is a representation of the return of Christ—His Second Coming. What we're doing today is commemorating and looking forward to the time that Christ comes back in power and glory as a conquering king, and takes possession of the kingdom—this earth. And when this earth finally begins to be ruled by the government of God rather than the government of men—under the auspices of the adversary. That's what this day is all about. Within the Bible and the Old Testament, there are approximately thirty places where the term "the Day of the Lord" is mentioned. That is the term that refers to that auspicious moment, that time in the future, when Jesus Christ returns and takes possession of His kingdom. It's called the Day of the Lord.

Today—not only with this morning's sermon, but between this morning's and this afternoon's sermon—we're going to try and push through the thread of the overall picture of what is involved in the approaching and the accomplishing of the Day of the Lord—which is the representation of the Feast of Trumpets. And I say that's a big undertaking. I know Mr. Cole is famous for saying he's going to move rapidly, well, I'm going to try and do it, because there's no way we're going to get through it if I don't. But in some points I'm going to be reading very fast—probably so fast that it's going to be hard to get everything. But there are certain things that I want us to hear and to read as we go through some of these chapters, but we won't be able

to dwell on a lot of it. There are certain points and certain areas I want to pull out and I want us to focus on, but the overall purpose today is to get the thread of the picture of how God has laid out the things that will occur at the very end of the end times, that will lead up to the actual fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets and the return of Jesus Christ. That's what we're after.

First, turn with me to Joel, chapter 2 and verse 30, and we'll read just one of those verses which speak of the Day of the Lord. Joel 2, and verse 30: "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth; blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come." So here we find that this day, picturing Christ's return, is called both a great day and it is also called a terrible day. And as we go through Revelation, we're going to find out why it's labeled both great and at the same time, terrible.

What are the things that are to occur, leading to that great and terrible Day of the Lord? Well, the book of Revelation tells a story. We're going to go through the overview of the events that culminate in that triumphant moment of that conquering King. Let's begin—and I'll tell you ahead of time, as many times as I've read the book of Revelation and gone through it, if you just start from chapter one and you read through to the end; okay, I'm going to understand all of this, I'm going to try and get a handle on how all of this works. You've got seals, you've got trumpets, and you've got plagues, and you've got woes, and you've got all these things. And before you get to the end of it, it's like, okay, I know all of this stuff happens, but I can't keep it straight. I don't know if you've ever felt that way, trying to go through it. One thing I want to try and do is lay this out in a way that you get the overall thread and understanding of a blueprint of how this whole thing fits together. If you understand it, at least then it's easier to go back, and as you read in more detail you will be able to put those things together in the right place. I think you're going to find it fascinating, the things that we'll come up with.

First, let's start in chapter 1 of Revelation. It sets the stage for the vision of John. And the first thing that we're going to find out—to clarify, so there is no misunderstanding, as most people in the world have done—this was not John's revelation. This book is the revelation of Jesus Christ, and John the Apostle was only the servant who received it—who wrote down the things that he saw. Take special note of the fact that it is what John saw, that Jesus Christ actually gave to him to report. Revelation 1 and verse 1:

"The revelation of Jesus Christ." That's what we're talking about.

...which God gave unto him to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass. And he sent and signified it by his angel, unto his servant John, who bear record of the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand.

And we know that we're living in the last days. And we know that all of these things in the Bible were written for that last generation as a warning. It is for us, brethren. These things are written as a warning for us, to help us to prepare so that we are not caught off guard by those things which will occur. Skip down to verse number 7:

"Behold, he cometh with clouds. And every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him." So whatever that coming—that Second Coming—involves, Christ will be coming in the clouds. And it says all eyes on the face of this earth will see Him. And that means all, including those who are responsible for His death and crucifixion. For we know that every single one of us have been guilty of the blood of Jesus Christ. That means all humanity. Verse 8:

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. I, John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Remember that John was exiled by the Roman government at that time, to that island. So, this was very near the end of the first century when this prophecy was written and when John received this vision that he wrote down.

"I was in the Spirit." What is the setting? This tells us exactly the setting for the entire book of Revelation. Where was it that Jesus Christ transported John for this vision? "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." This tells you the entire key to the book of Revelation. It is a setting for the Lord's day—which is the return of Jesus Christ.

And heard behind me a great voice of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. And what thou seest, write in a book and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia.

Verse number 12:

And I turned to see the voice which spake with me, and being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks. And in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, one like unto the son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot.

Now listen, this is one of the best descriptions in the Bible of what that Christ, that coming King, looks like, physically, upon His return. Notice it:

Clothed with a garment down to the foot. And girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow. And his eyes were as a flame of fire. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace. And his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

Compare that to the majority of the world's perception of what Christ looks like. Is this the mealy-mouthed, weakling Christ that most so-called Christians portray? Is this the Christ that they picture in their minds when they pray? Is this what you think most people think of when they think about that Being they think they're worshiping as Christ? The Christ that we're talking about here is no weakling. He certainly is not a wimp. This is a conquering King. This is a Being of incredible power and majesty, given authority by the heavenly Father to execute judgement upon this earth, and to complete the mission that He was given.

Verse 17, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." How many people think that they're going to talk to Christ and tell Him a few things when He returns? If they saw even the limited amount that the Apostle John saw in this vision, they too would be trembling and falling forward on their faces as dead.

He laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth and was dead. And behold, I am alive evermore, amen. And have the keys to hell and of death.

How is it that this Being has the keys to hell and to death? Because He came in the likeness of a human being, and was born and lived perfectly, never sinning, passing the tests that were set before Him—every temptation of His own natural mind and of the temptation of the adversary. He overcame that adversary. He won and He conquered and He had the right to be that representative—to become that King and to take possession of the earth. The reason that He has the keys to hell and to death is because He overcame death by His perfect life and by His sacrifice and by His resurrection.

"Write the things which thou hast seen and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter"—Christ's instruction to the Apostle John.

The mystery of the seven stars which thou saw in my right hand and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches. And the seven candlesticks which thou saw are the seven churches.

Then we go into chapters 2 and 3 which we're not going to read, which are Jesus Christ's specific messages to each one of those seven churches of Asia Minor. At some point in the

future, I have a strong desire to study and to actually prepare some detailed sermons on the seven churches. I'm not prepared to do that yet because I don't understand everything yet that I want to about those churches. Not from the standpoint of interpreting prophecy and applying the mistakes of the past as far as physical eras of the church through history. The thing that Mr. Armstrong always said was, fundamentally, those seven churches represent attitudes. They represent attitudes that would exist within the Body at any given time, and especially in the last days. Which means that even though they're referred to as seven different churches, they are attitudes that truly exist among brethren in the same body—among God's people, and especially in the last days. They're warnings—two whole chapters that are written at the beginning of this prophecy on what was going to happen leading up to the return of that conquering King. So, are those warnings to the churches important? I expect they are. Because they're the things that each one of us absolutely need to do to make sure we're in a position to receive that reward when He returns and to avoid all of the catastrophes and the things that are going to occur that we're going to read about in the next few chapters.

But let's skip over to chapters 4 and 5, because, remember, what we're trying to do is pick up the thread of the events—the physical events—that are going to lead up to that return of Jesus Christ. So we're going to move to chapter 4 and chapter 5, which, if you're making notes about the headings—about what each chapter in Revelation actually is—chapters 4 and 5 are the prelude and the setting for the execution of all of those events that are going to transpire. So, as you read through chapters 4 and 5, you're going to get the setting for what's going on—both on earth and in heaven—in preparation for the unfolding of all these miraculous events. Revelation chapter 4:

After this I looked and behold, a door was opened in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me, which said, Come up hither and I will show you things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit and behold, a throne was set in heaven.

Here it is, that in vision, the Apostle John was transported to the very throne of God to see an image of what that third heaven looks like. Notice the detailed description. And even to the very limited ability of these human minds that can never begin to fathom what that throne of God is like and those Beings, those creatures and the personages of the Father and the Son are like, but yet, as best we can, let's try and imagine, through the descriptions that we're going to see in this next couple of chapters, what that must be like.

"Immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne was set in heaven and one sat on the throne." That is the Father.

And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone. And there was a rainbow round about the throne in sight like unto an emerald. And round about

the throne were four and twenty seats. And upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads, crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices.

Keep these things in mind because there's a special reason, later—either this morning or this afternoon—I want you to keep in mind the description of what's going on at the throne of God. It's going to become very important when we get to the end.

Out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne which are the seven spirits of God. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal.

"And in the midst of the throne and round about the throne were four beasts," or more appropriately translated, "living creatures." These are not to be confused with the beast, the beast power of Babylon and of Satan. These are living creatures that worship and serve at the throne of God.

Full of eyes, before and behind. The first beast was like a lion. And the second like a calf. And the third creature had a face as a man. And the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. And the four creatures had each of them six wings about him, and they were full of eyes within.

I don't think that we can even imagine what those creatures look like. "And they rest not day and night." This is very critical, keep this in mind. What are these living creatures doing and the four and twenty elders? "And they rest not day and night." They rest not day and night, "saying, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty which was, and is, and is to come." A continual praise and worship for the Father in that kingdom at His throne of these living creatures that were created to serve. Continual praise and worship—going on continually at that throne.

And when those creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne and liveth forever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down and before him that sat on the throne and worship him that liveth forever and ever. And cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power. For thou hast created all things. For thy pleasure they are and were created.

Here are beings who understand and respect and fear the power of the Eternal God who rules this universe. And they show that respect continually in their worship before Him. How many men on the face of this earth humble themselves and show that kind of respect for God?

Moving on to chapter 5. In chapter 5, we first hear, now, about a book. And the book that's going to follow tells the entire story of the events leading up to the return of Christ. We're talking about a book that is sealed with seven seals. The important thing to understand, and what we were taught early-on in the church to understand about the book of Revelation, is that this book with its seven seals is the complete story. This will become more clear as we go forward. We'll try and clear up some of the difficulties in understanding the difference in seals and trumpets and plagues and woes and all of these things. If you want to take a separate piece of paper and draw down a column: seal one, seal two, seal three, all the way through seal seven, it might help to paint a picture to actually be able to put these things together as we go through them. It's a book. The book encompasses the whole story. Which means everything else that's described, including trumpets, including woes, including plagues, must be encompassed within those seven seals because the book is the story. Okay? A lot of confusion has come about in thinking that, well, the trumpets are duplicates of the seals or else they happen after the seals—like you have the book and then you have these other things. No, everything that's described in this book of Revelation is encompassed within that one book and those seven seals. I like to think of it as we go through and these seals are opened one by one, it's as if the first seal covers the cover and is wrapped around the entire book. It's keeping anything else from being opened and understood. Once the first seal is taken off, you can only see the first chapter because there's a second seal that's attached to the first page of the second chapter and it wraps around the rest of the book. So when the first seal is removed the only thing you can now flip to read is chapter one. Then it requires someone to take the second seal off and that opens up chapter two. But the other five seals are still continuing to keep the pages locked-down in that book so that you cannot see the rest of those chapters until each one of those seals are peeled back. Okay, so keep that mental picture in mind too as we go through.

Chapter 5: "And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne. . ." Who is it that's sitting on the throne? It's the Father.

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?"

Obviously, not just anyone could open that book.

And no man in heaven nor in earth was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof.

Who is the lion of the tribe of Judah? Who is that Root of David? It's the same Being—Jesus Christ. It's that coming King. He was worthy because of the perfect sacrifice that He made. He was the One and the only One who is worthy to open the seals of the book.

And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes which are the Seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

Verse 7, "And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne." Picture what's happening now. The Father sitting upon the throne in the third heaven holds the book. Jesus Christ, the God of the second part, who is the only worthy One, now takes the book from the Father's hand.

And when he had taken the book, the four creatures and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.

You're going to see this reference made two or three more times as we go through the story; that as these praises are offered up by the elders, many times, also included are the odors of incense which are, in fact, the prayers of the saints—of God's faithful people—that actually ascend up to the third heaven and are offered as sacrifices to the Heavenly Father. Keep that in mind. I wonder if we think about our prayers in that manner, or view them as having that much importance to God? And that they are an actual part of the worship that occurs at the throne of God. Keep it in mind. Notice also, as we go through this story, the times in which it says that those twenty-four elders and those angelic beings that worship at the throne, fall down in a special worship. They seem to go in line with very important benchmarks within the story and within the process of this entire book unfolding. As you'll see, it's almost like they're punctuation marks to tell you, this is important. Something monumental is happening now. This is a critical part of the story because right as something is happening or about to happen, all twenty-four of these beings fall down and worship and praise at that very moment. Here's the first thing that occurs—right as Jesus Christ is about to open the first seal on the book and those twenty-four elders fall down and worship:

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation. And hast made us unto our God, kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

This is a prophecy of exactly what the saints were to look forward to, and why they were willing to endure everything that they did in this way of life. That's the whole purpose.

And hast made us unto our God, kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the creatures and the elders. And the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands."

How many angelic beings and creatures are there in the realm of God?

Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever. And the four creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshiped him that liveth forever and ever.

That's the end of the prelude. That sets the stage now as we begin to open the book and see that story unfold which culminates in Christ taking possession of His kingdom.

Chapter 6: Within chapter six we're going to find the first six seals opened—in this one chapter. Revelation has twenty-two chapters and yet, already, in chapter six alone, six of the seven seals of the entire story are opened in this one chapter. That means that there's a whole lot less time spent on those first six seals than there is on the seventh seal. The seventh seal, primarily, we're going to cover this afternoon. Chapter 6 and verse 1. Now, remember, this is what John is seeing in vision:

"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals"—the first seal—"and I heard as it were, the noise of thunder, one of the four creatures saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold . . ." Now, what did John see? ". . . a white horse. And he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer." Who is this? Who is this riding the white horse with a crown, coming to conquer? Is it Christ? Let's wait and see. Verse 3:

And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second creature say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red. And power was given unto him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another. And there was given unto him a great sword.

Who is this? Do we know? Let's read all the way through verse 8 before we start to go back, and then we're going to go back and we're going to look at the first four seals, and we're going to see if we can figure out exactly what these things are referring to. Verse 5:

And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third creature say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo, a black horse. And he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny, and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

Who is this? Verse 7, "And when he had opened the fourth seal . . ." Now, remember, the entire story of the book of Revelation is encompassed in the seven seals. Within the first eight verses we've already covered the first four—more than half of the entire story.

And when he had opened the fourth seal I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold, a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was death. And hell followed with him, and power was given unto them.

Here now is a statement in verse number 8 that refers back to all of these first four seals and the horses that were pictured, and the riders, in the first four seals collectively. And what does it say—because this starts to give us a hint about what we're talking about? "And power was given unto *them* over the fourth part of the earth." To do what? "To kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." Is that first horseman with the crown, riding on the white horse, is that Christ? These are the four horsemen of the apocalypse. These are the first four seals. And that first seal does not represent Christ. Who then could that individual on the white horse represent? There's a lot of the symbolism in this book that we cannot understand because there hasn't been given a key to know, but concerning these seals, we can. And as Mr. Armstrong always said, the only way that you can make those conclusions is if you let the Bible interpret the Bible. The key to the four horsemen of the apocalypse is found in Matthew chapter 24.

Let's turn over to Matthew chapter 24, and keep your finger right there in Revelation 6 because for the next little while we're going to be turning back and forth between Matthew 24 and Revelation 6. Matthew 24 and beginning in verse 3. This is Christ, actually in person, when He was alive on this earth in human form, teaching His disciples and answering their questions concerning the circumstances that were going to lead to His Second Coming. Because the disciples wanted to know, when are these things going to happen? And here Christ gave a prophecy from His own mouth that was recorded to explain those things. And pay special attention to how closely and exactly it mirrors the vision John wrote down in Revelation and tell me it's not exactly the very same source who revealed it. Matthew 24 and verse 3:

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately saying, Tell us, when shall these things be and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you, for many shall come in my name saying I am Christ and shall deceive many.

"For many shall come in my name saying I am Christ and shall deceive many." Does that sound like that white horse already? Who is it that rides the white horse and wears a crown and carries a bow? It is called Christ. It is one who comes impersonating the conquering King to come. The very seal is the expanse of false teaching, of those who claim to be the representatives of Jesus Christ. Whether that seal has already been opened, I can't say, and no one can say for sure. But whenever it begins and whenever that seal is opened by Jesus Christ standing at the throne of God in the third heaven, the very first thing that's going to occur in the unfolding of this story is the expanse of false doctrine by those who claim to be the representatives of Christ—speaking the words of Christ. But they will be false teachers.

Verse number 6: "And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars." Who was the second horseman in Revelation 6? That red horse who came with war and killing. And here Christ showed in the very same order, the very picture of those seals, now, in this Matthew 24 prophecy. "And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars." That is the second seal, brethren. "See that you be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass. But the end is not yet." Why did Christ say the end is not yet? That's only two seals of the seven seals of the entire prophecy of the book before the return of Jesus Christ.

"For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. And there shall be . . ." What comes next? First, the false teachers, then, wars, and, " . . . there shall be famines." Famines, brethren, is the third seal. It corresponds with that next horse—with the black horse—that holds the balance and the scales—a lack of food around this earth. " . . . and pestilences." There is number four, right on its heels—represented by the fourth horse and the horseman—that pale horse that we just read about, which was the fourth seal. "And earthquakes in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." Why did Christ say they're the beginning of sorrows? They're the first four seals opened to get the attention of mankind—to prepare the way for the coming return of Jesus Christ.

Now, before we go back to Revelation 6—because Matthew 24 actually shows us the picture of those very same seals that are in Revelation 6—what's the next thing that Jesus Christ told His disciples? Let's read verse 9, then let's flip over to Revelation 6 and see if it matches. Verse 9, "And then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you. And you shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." What do you think that might correspond to in the story? Before we turn back:

And then shall many be offended and shall betray one another and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.

Right here within these very few verses, Jesus Christ squashed the whole story into a very few words. The whole picture of the seals that represent the story leading up to His return, the reactions that people were going to have, the fact that that gospel would be preached to the entire world—and we're going to see the details of how that gospel is going to be preached to the entire world. ". . . for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." And what's involved in the end—the culmination when Christ returns? A whole lot of story within those very few words. Now, let's turn back to Revelation 6 and verse 9, and see if it matches up. What were we talking about in verse 9 in Matthew 24 when it said, "they shall deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you. And you shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake"? Verse 9 in Revelation 6:

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them. And it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also, and their brethren that should be killed as they were should be fulfilled.

The fifth seal is the tribulation. The very same thing that Christ said in Matthew 24—described here in verse 9 of chapter 6 of Revelation—is the tribulation, the persecution of God's people. Notice, then, that the martyrs that preceded in the early centuries are those who were killed for the Word's sake, and are crying out. "And white robes were given unto every one of them. And it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season until their fellowservants also and their brethren that *should* be killed. . ." Here, it's the voice of those who have already been martyred and are waiting for vindication, for justification, for that which has occurred to them at the hand of the adversary and of men. And, yet, it is told to them that the time is not yet, because there is an additional tribulation—there is yet tribulation and persecution that is to occur before the return of Christ, before that is complete. "And their brethren that should be killed." That means in the future—not yet transpired. ". . . should be killed as they were should be fulfilled." There's yet martyrdom to occur of the people of God. It wasn't all completed just at the time of the first century—the persecution of the early Christians. That tribulation is going to be fulfilled—that martyrdom will be fulfilled and completed in the last of the last days leading to the return of Christ. The fifth seal is the tribulation. Notice—because a lot of people become confused, and they confuse the tribulation with the actual Day of the Lord. We're not talking about the Day of the Lord yet. We're going to get to the Day of the Lord, but we're only at the fifth seal. We still have two more seals to go in the story. The tribulation is seal number five. Okay, keep that one in mind.

Flip back to Matthew 24, and let's read verse 29: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light." We're talking about

some awesome heavenly signs like nothing we've ever seen. Immediately after the tribulation. So this is the next step—the tribulation is completed, it's over, it's finished. And then what happens next? "After the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken." Is it possible we're talking about the sixth seal? Is it perhaps true that the sixth seal in the story is the shaking of these heavenly bodies and the heavenly signs? Well, turn back to Revelation 6 and verse 12 and let's see:

And I beheld, and when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth.

Isn't that what we read? "Even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together." I can't even imagine what the picture of that is going to be. What is going to happen in the sky and the heavens? When John describes it as a scroll furling in heaven?

And every mountain and island were moved out of their places, and the kings of the earth and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains.

There's something that is going to be so frightening about the total upheaval of the heavenly bodies and everything being moved out of its place, that it's going to absolutely terrify human beings.

" . . . and said unto the mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb." Keep that term in mind. The wrath of the Lamb. Verse 17, "For the great day of his wrath is come and who shall be able to stand?" What we're talking about here is now a prelude. The heavenly signs are the sixth seal—it's the next piece of the story. After the sixth seal, there's only one seal left. The seventh seal encompasses the final piece of the entire story. What we're seeing here in verse number 16 and 17, at the conclusion of the heavenly signs and all of this upheaval around the earth and in the skies and in the heavens, is now a reference to the seventh seal that's coming. And what we're going to find is that the seventh seal is the wrath of the Lamb. "For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" The seventh seal involves the final pieces of the story, including the return of Jesus Christ. Remember, the entire story is found within that one book. The seven seals that cover all seven of those chapters, encompass the entire story from start to finish. So, if Christ's return is included in the prophecy, it must be—we haven't seen the return of Christ yet, have we, in the first six seals? The return of Christ, then, must be encompassed in the seventh seal—the last chapter of the book. Remember, the entire story is included within those seven.

Matthew 24 and verse 30. Here's what happens next:

And then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven. And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn. And they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

In synoptic fashion in Matthew 24, in teaching His disciples, He gave a very short version of the entire plan and those circumstances involved in the seven seals. After the heavenly signs pictured by the sixth seal are those final events that culminate in the return of Jesus Christ—coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet." What are we keeping today except the Feast of Trumpets? Here we're going to begin to see how the significance of Trumpets fall into place in this Holy Day and in the overall plan. "And they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, and from end of heaven to the other." Keep that in mind too. Now, here we've seen in Matthew 24, a very short synopsis of those things. In Revelation—in the future chapters—we're going to see a much more expansive picture of exactly what occurs in the time sequence. That completes chapter 6.

What about chapter 7 of Revelation? What do we find in chapter 7? It's not the continuation of the story. Here we find one of the interludes that takes away from the main thread of the story and pulls us away into a parallel story that gives us more details about something else that's going on at the same time of all of these events that we've been reading about. Chapter 7 of Revelation is an interruption in the story, and it describes the two companies—we'll call them the two companies of God's people. We haven't heard much about what's happening with God's people in the midst of this yet, except the fifth seal with the tribulation. But now, chapter 7 is going to go into detail and tell us some important things about God's people:

And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the winds should not blow on the earth nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

Who are these four angels and what is the deal with these winds. What is this talking about? I remember when I was younger and reading this, I assumed that one of the plagues was that the wind wouldn't blow and that would upset the weather forces or whatever. That these four angels stood on the four corners of the earth and they just make everything so quiet, there's no movement of the air. Is that what it's talking about? Read further and we're going to see the details to be able to interpret exactly who these four angels are and exactly what these winds are. "And I saw another angel ascending from the East, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels." So, here's another angel that's coming up and instructing these other four angels that are already there, poised at the four corners of the earth.

" . . . with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given . . ." Now, here we see the definition of what these four angels are doing. What is their mission? " . . . with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea." So, what do you think these angels are doing? They are agents of God, carrying out additional plagues now upon the earth. But what is this angel that rises from the East? What does he tell the four angels? " . . . saying, hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees." Till what? There's something that had to happen before these four angels were turned loose. And until that occurred, God sent this other angel to say, hold it. Don't make another step. We're not ready for you to unleash these plagues until something else happens. And what was that something else? "Till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." Something had to occur with the approved people of God on this earth before the beginning of the seventh seal was to be unleashed. "And I heard the number of them which were sealed. And there were sealed, an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel." However these tribes are defined and whoever is a part of that, you know these are God's people. These are approved, who have been called, who have been selected, who have been chosen, and who have passed the test and have been found to be faithful, and are at this time sealed in the forehead by the Father—which is through the Holy Spirit—for protection. Skipping down to verse number 9: "After this . . ." Now, that's one group, we're talking about a hundred and forty-four thousand that are considered Israel.

But what else do we have? Verse 9, "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude." Now is this just further definition and clarification of the hundred and forty-four thousand? Or, is this another group, separate from the hundred and forty-four thousand? "And behold, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number of all nations." Wait a minute. So, this can't be the hundred and forty-four thousand. The hundred and forty-four thousand are Israel—whether that's strictly physical Israelites who are part of the first resurrection, or whether that is whatever body is considered spiritual Israel, I cannot define who is included in the hundred and forty-four thousand. But here we have a separate and entirely distinct group who we refer to as the innumerable multitude. " . . . which no man could number of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes." So, whoever this innumerable multitude is, they partake of the very same blessings as the hundred and forty-four thousand of Israel. They also are clothed with white robes. They also are given access to the throne of God and stand before the Lamb.

. . . and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces and worshiped God. Saying, amen, blessing, and glory, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, unto our God, forever and ever, amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? And I said unto him [John speaking] Sir, thou knowest.

And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

All of these came through the tribulation in one way or the other—a combination of the hundred and forty-four thousand and the innumerable multitude. Whether these are individuals that were called years ago and have understood the ways of God and have held faithful, or who have departed, but have been pulled out of the fire before the culmination of these events—or whether this innumerable multitude are individuals who have never had their minds opened to understand the Truth before the time of these final seals, but yet God allowed them to understand, and they responded to the gospel message, and they responded to the circumstances, and the tribulation, and the heavenly signs, and the pestilence, and the war, and actually became converted in the eleventh hour before the opening of the seventh seal—I can't say for sure which. But you know that you've got this incredible body—this army—of individuals that are standing before the Lamb, before the opening of the seventh seal, who are wearing white robes and are sealed by the Father. These are converted people. These are individuals who passed the test. I can't help but think about the parable—and we don't have time to turn to it—of those workers and laborers that came and were commissioned, and agreed upon a price to work in the fields. And that husbandman continued to hire workers throughout the day—even unto the eleventh hour. And when the day was over and it was time to pay each one for what he had done, they all received the same payment—even those who worked only one hour in the field. Are many of these thousands and thousands of the innumerable multitude, perhaps, among those who are called in the very eleventh hour, and yet, still certified by God as being worthy to receive eternal life and have a place within that Kingdom and the first resurrection?

Who are these men? Who are these men in the last days who think that they're preaching the gospel and that they're doing the work of God—in their own measly and pitiful way, thinking that they're fulfilling the prophecies of Revelation to spread the gospel throughout the entire world? What is the fruit of their ministries, and how many are being converted and are making their robes white before the Lamb? Where are the hundred and forty-four thousand, and where is the innumerable multitude that's responding to their preaching? Who is it that's concerned that the word of God is not going to be fulfilled? Who is it that's concerned that God's will is not being accomplished? Who is it—because we're dealing with only a very small remnant in these last days, and unfortunately, appears to get smaller and smaller—that thinks the will of God is not going to be accomplished on this earth? This prophecy says that there are going to be thousands and thousands and thousands that will make their robes white. There is going to be a great first harvest in that resurrection when Christ returns, make no mistake about it. It's unfortunate that it appears most of it will come only after incredibly terrible things will take place on this earth. Because the minds of men will not receive God in normal circumstances. It takes those kinds of terrible, cataclysmic events before men will soften their minds and hear the message that God has for them. "These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." If their robes are made

white in the blood of the lamb, that means they have received forgiveness of their sins. Who can receive forgiveness of their sins and have that relationship with Him, except those who were called, who were converted, who received the Holy Spirit? They have to be those that are called—even in the eleventh hour.

Therefore, are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. And he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Chapter 7 completes, then, the picture of the two companies of God's people—the hundred and forty-four thousand of Israel and the innumerable multitude who will make their robes white.

Next—because there's so much material—I'm going to go ahead and keep going a little bit. My initial plan was to stop, but I've already done this in a little bit less than an hour—because there's so much material that is going to be hard to get to this afternoon, I want to go ahead and get through a little bit more of this before we stop.

So let's now move into chapter 8 of Revelation. And here we begin the seventh seal. And this is where confusion sets in with people who try and read Revelation. Up to now you've been seeing just seven seals, so everything fits in order. But here, what do we find?

And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.

Uh oh. Now we have seven trumpets. I wonder how that relates to the seals? Remember, this is that vision that John wrote down—everything that he saw—as each occurrence happened. What is occurring? "And when he had opened the seventh seal," skipping to verse 2, "and I saw . . ." As soon as that seventh seal is opened, that's when he saw the seven angels with seven trumpets. So those seven trumpets must be a part of the seventh seal. What you find out is that in the story that God has put together, it begins with seven—which is the number of completion—seven seals in the story. But those seals encompass the entire book. The whole story is within the seven seals. But, as soon as you get to the last chapter—chapter number 7—all of a sudden when you open that final seal, you find out that it is sub-divided into seven parts. So the story is not over very quickly. In fact, now we have seven sub-divisions represented by trumpets that we have to analyze, that are all part of that final seventh seal of the story. Before we move on I want to read verse 1 of chapter 8 again. And here's where I want

you to think about what we went through in chapters 4 and chapter 5. Notice: "And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." Most people skip over that and don't pay it any attention. When I was studying this it struck me very strongly that when you compare this with what has been going on at the throne of God up until now—what did we read in chapters 4 and 5 was happening at the throne of God on that sea of crystal glass, with those twenty-four elders and the four creatures, what had they been doing? Bowing before God, praising and glorifying God night and day. The voice of many waters, thunders and lightnings, continually. All of this activity. All of these things occurring as this worship happens at the throne of God continually, night and day. But what happens now? Something very unusual happens that even causes everything to stop in the third heaven at the throne of God. How important is the opening of this seventh seal? How critical is this benchmark—this point in time in the overall story leading to the return of Christ? It's so monumental that even the voices of those praising angels cease. What would it be like to be there, and all of a sudden, for everything to stop? And for the space of a half-hour at the throne of God, there is nothing but complete silence. Would it make you think that maybe something incredibly important is about to happen?

And I saw the seven angels which stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censor. And there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it [again] with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angels hand. And the angel took the censor and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth. And there were voices, and thunderings and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

The final seal is opened. Seven angels are given seven trumpets and are about to carry out their final mission, as instructed by God, in preparation for the return of the Lamb in power and glory. Remember the people of God have already been sealed. Before this happens—remember, we read back before about those four angels that stood on the corners of the earth, ready to unleash the winds that represented plagues to hurt the earth and the sea? That has not happened yet because, remember, what had to happen before this seventh seal was opened and these seven final trumpets begin to blow? The people of God had to be sealed and protected and put aside to be shielded. Now that's been completed. Now the people of God—the hundred and forty-four thousand and the innumerable multitude who made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb—have been sealed by the Father. Now, the seven trumpets—which are the seven plagues of the seventh seal—are ready to be sounded. So if you have your paper, and you wrote down a column of seven seals, out to the side of the seventh seal, list seven trumpets to show that there are seven parts to that final seventh seal, because it's going to get more complicated. That's not the end of it. There are seven more things—okay—that are

not to be confused with either the trumpets or the seals, which we also need to draw into the picture to see how it fits together. Verse number 7:

The first angel sounded and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood. And they were cast upon the earth, and the third part of trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

We cannot conclude to say exactly whether this is figurative, or whether it specifically means, truly, a third of all trees and all of the grass on the entire face of the earth is going to be burned up, or whether that really represents something else. But we do know from this description, it's something that's going to be cataclysmic. It's certainly going to be a phenomenal plague. ". . . and they were cast upon the earth. And the third part of trees was burned up." It's bad enough when we have forest fires that burn thousands and thousands of acres in this country—let alone a destruction that makes front page news. What would happen at a point in time when a third of all the foliage on the earth is burned up, and all green grass is burned up?

Verse number 8: "And the second angel sounded. And as it were, a great mountain, burning with fire, was cast into the sea." Whether that is a description of a meteor, or who knows what, something else, cataclysmic in nature, comes at the sounding of that second trumpet. "And the third part of the sea became blood. And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died." We hear stories about big schools of fish that wash up on the shore dead and biologists can't understand what exactly happened. Those things make front page news. But what happens when a third of all the sea creatures in the oceans of this world die? "And a third part of the ships were destroyed." Think about all of the navies of the countries of this earth and all of the commercial vessels, and tankers, and the passenger lines—all of the activity on the ocean at this very moment—and to think about a third of all of those ships being destroyed cataclysmically.

Verse 10, "And the third angel sounded. And there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp"—or a torch, more appropriately translated. Like a torch falling out of the sky. ". . . and it fell upon a third part of the rivers." So, now, we've already seen the plague that has affected the land, that's affected the sea—and killed a third of all the life, and destroyed a third of the ships. Now, we've got a plague that falls upon the fresh water.

. . .burning as it were a torch. And it fell upon a third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of water. And the name of the star is called Wormwood. And a third part of the waters became wormwood. And many men died of the waters because they were made bitter.

No one can interpret exactly what this wormwood is—what its significance is. All we know is that it's something that's going to poison the fresh water—a third of the fresh water on

the face of the earth. "And the fourth angel sounded, and a third part of the sun was smitten, and a third part of the moon." Now we've already had the heavenly signs that occurred—remember, a part of the sixth seal? We've already had all kinds of incredible things that have happened in the sky concerning the moon and the stars and the sun. But now there's even more. Now, as a part of the fourth trumpet of the seventh seal, something even more cataclysmic occurs. "The third part of the sun was smitten, and a third part of the moon, and a third part of the stars, so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise." How big a deal is it when we have an eclipse for a few seconds, and only a few people on the face of the earth can even see it? And that is a huge deal—in the middle of the day—for the sun to be darkened. What about when this occurs and this plague is unleashed, and a third part of the sun is darkened and it doesn't come back?

"And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven," verse 13, "saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason," of what? This now is a prelude leading up to the next three trumpets that have not yet been sounded. We've had four trumpets sounded and four horrible plagues unleashed upon the earth. And now an angel flies through heaven, ". . . saying, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound!" So here, an angel sets the stage for the final three trumpets—which are part of the seven trumpets, which are part of the seventh of seven seals. We're going to find out that these final three trumpets are also called the three woes. Understanding the definition so that you don't get them confused helps a lot. The fifth trumpet is called the first woe. The sixth trumpet that we're going to see is called the second woe. And the seventh trumpet is called the third woe. Once we get to the seventh trumpet—which is the third woe—we're going to have the completion of the story. That, this afternoon.