

The SCROLL
of REVELATION
given to the
Apostle JOHN

explained by
a servant of God

PART FOUR:
Six Seals
The 144,00 Sealed
Martyred Saints With Jesus

(6:1-7:17)
January, 2003

3. The things which will take place after this

(6-22)

Generally speaking then, **the rest of the book** is “part 3” of the Lord’s outline for John (1:19). Here is where the going gets tough. Here is where sequential methods of book-reading will not work. Part 3 starts with chapter 6, which speaks of the opening of six of the seven seals.

It is critical to see the **relationship** between the three sets of seven judgment happenings. First to remember is that the **seals** (all of chapter 6, and 8:1-6) cover *all*. Then the **trumpets** (8:7-11:19) recap and give close-ups of the latter *seals*. The **bowls** (15-16) are a close-up of the final *trumpet*. There is much overlapping and repetition, so as to include more and more details, but not more elapsed time. Chapters 7, 12-14, and 17-22, give *background material* to help us understand what is going on while the judgments of God fall on the earth. As the book unfolds, I believe this arrangement will become clear.

So here is chapter 6. Remember now, chapter 6 covers the **entire scope of the Lamb’s Scroll** in its 17 verses!

The first six seals

(6:1-17)

The first four seals (6:1-8). Jesus opens all seven seals. The first four seals are further introduced by one living creature each. The living creatures are given a number and a name in 4:7. Their number only is referred to in the chapter before us. Seal one is introduced by the lion, two by the calf/ox, three by “man”, and four by the eagle. But the connection from these four horsemen to the living creatures is further strengthened in Ezekiel’s vision (Ezekiel 1 and 10). There, the same creatures that John sees here are described, with the addition of the mysterious “wheels”. I am not aware of a plausible interpretation for Ezekiel’s wheel vision. But I do believe that it is somehow tied in to the end time by way of John’s revelation of the living creatures, and the four horsemen. I believe there is an interpretation that will make perfect sense when the time is right. Scales will fall off someone’s eyes and the truth will manifest itself. God would not tantalize His people with a vision of no meaning.

Zechariah 6 mentions horses of the same hue as the ones described here, albeit in a different order. And while we’re looking at Biblical precedents for the “four horsemen”, it might be interesting to see that the number “four” is used elsewhere significantly: There are the “four winds of heaven” spoken of in 7:1, and by Jesus in Matthew 24. There are the four corners and quarters of the earth in 7:1 and 20:8. Four angels are stationed there. There are four horns on the altar in Heaven, 9:13, and four angels at the Euphrates River. An important number.

I believe that these first four seals should be viewed as a unit, separate from the other three, because of the connections mentioned above, because of the significance of the number “four”, and especially because of John’s use of the fraction “one-fourth” as compared to one-third later.

Seal 1 (6:1-2) The world conqueror. The events of the scroll begin with one conqueror. They end with Another (chapter 19). The unnamed world leader of the first seal is replaced permanently by the Son of God. Both appear on the world scene with a “white horse” (19:11). Both bring destruction on the planet. The destruction of the former we know of

as the Tribulation. The latter Horseman ushers in the ultimate wrath of God, and then a new Heaven and Earth. All of this, from antichrist to Christ, is found in one chapter!

At least, that is the traditional explanation of the white horse, and it is quite believable. But it is fair, I think, to suggest an alternate idea to the interpretation of this white horse figure. Deeper probing into the Book lets us know that there will be **another ruler** of world wide proportions *before* antichrist sits on his throne. We will speak more of him later. It seems possible to me that this conqueror with “no arrows” (6:2) may be a man of peace and that nations bow to him because of his great political charisma. Perhaps he is the one who has resolved the Middle East crises, and an appreciative world brings him to power, marking the beginning of the seven-year countdown. Perhaps he reigns the *first* three and one half years.

There is an interesting parallel between Revelation 6 and Matthew 24. Could the four horsemen be “**the beginning of sorrows**” (Matthew 24:8) mentioned by Jesus, the clue that we are at the very end of history? Some of course see all these things of Matthew and the first 4 seals happening *today* and in all generations for that matter. But, at least speaking for Matthew’s account, Jesus was being asked a very specific question when he spoke of these parallel occurrences. It was a request for Him to spell out the signs of His coming and the *end* of the age. Though many will come in His Name, and wars will be constant, along with poverty, there will be, according to John’s vision here, one in particular that will come, sparking the final series of wars and plagues.

Seal 2 (6:3-4) War. The first 4 seals are the famed “four horsemen of the Apocalypse” and signal the beginning of world conquest and the reaction against it. All does not remain peaceful very long, if indeed we have correctly assumed that they began in peace. **One fourth** of the world is affected by this war. Seal two seems to match with Matthew 24:6-7.

Seal 3 (6:5-6) incredible poverty. Inflationary trends are so high that a man will gladly give a day’s wage for a measure of wheat roughly akin to our quart. The directive not to “harm the oil and the wine” may be given to an angel, similar to the instructions given in 7:3 and 9:4. There is a perfect timing to all that is about to follow. It has been thought by some that the saving of “luxuries” like oil and wine in a time of such poverty points to an elite class hoarding all the good things, as ruling parties always do. There certainly is abundance on the planet, with no reason for any to suffer, unless so cursed by their fellow man. Matthew 24:7b may come into play here.

Seal 4 (6:7-8) Death. The “sword” is the common form of killing in John’s day and for so much of history. We assume that modern “swords” are meant here, although there are certainly primitive areas of earth. The “beasts of the earth” will enter in, as they did, for example in AD 200-300 during the major lessening of population caused by the Civil War of the Roman Empire (per *Halley’s Bible Handbook*). Again see Matthew 24:7b.

I have been unable to find in the ensuing chapters of Revelation any clear reference to these early days of suffering. The rest of Revelation seems to center on the **5th and 6th seals**.

Seal 5 (6:9-11). With the 5th seal, **martyrdom**, we are clearly in the final portion of the Tribulation, as the martyrs already killed and with Jesus, but without their resurrected bodies, are told that it will be just a “little while” until their fellow servants will be joining them (6:11). (See Matthew 24:9-14 for parallel account.) Notice John uses the same formulation of words that he used to describe his own situation: these are persons persecuted “for the Word of God and their testimony.” (6:9, and 1:2, 9). These souls are linked to the believers again in 12:11.

Here they are seen as overcomers , not by their exit route, but by what Jesus did for them, and their own testimony of it all.

Truly there is a break between the former and latter seals here. Conquerors conquer indiscriminately and for their own purposes. But when God's people are singled out specifically for harassment , Satan has gained a firmer grip on things. This fits the picture of the Man of Sin, and the latter portion of the Tribulation.

Here is our first case of **non-sequential material** in the book. After much reading, one begins to focus in on themes and colors and ideas. This one could be labeled, "Persecution of the believers" and it is not only here, but also in 6:9-11, 7:9-17, 12:10-12, 12:17, 13:7. All of these verses show the same picture but from different perspectives.

With the 5th seal is the first clear reference to a **vibrant church** still on earth. The completion of the events described in the fifth seal is in the next chapter, verses 9-17. Suddenly many saints, innumerable in fact, from all over the world are with Jesus, and the specific means of their arrival is spelled out: they come out of the Great Tribulation, very obviously martyred, as the Man of Sin (see chapter 13) goes on a rampage against the people of God. This matches clearly with 12:7-12, where Satan is cast out to earth and believers overcome Him by the blood, and by their testimony.

In 12:17, we are given the **motivation** for this persecution. Antichrist is frustrated about not being able to make the Jews an example of his power and control, so he vents his fury on the believers in Jesus. The rage of this "beast" sounds very much like the man Antiochus Epiphanes, who was known to take out his feelings on the Jews when defeated elsewhere. More of him later.

The altar (6:9) . It is first mentioned in Revelation here, but it can be found also in 8:3-5, 9:13, 14:18, and 16:7. God's heavenly altar. The place of sacrifice, the place of incense, the place of prayers. God's favorites are slain by madmen on earth, but find their way to a safe location "under the altar" , a sacrifice well pleasing unto God, having sealed their testimony with actions, and with death.

On vengeance (6:10) . Notice that believers who are now with Jesus pray like David did, for vengeance. They have learned the perfect hatred of Heaven. They desire the full wrath of God to be poured out on those who refuse to repent. This must be our heart, with one important difference: We do not know, for the most part, who the terminally obstinate will be, and so while desiring God's justice, we are also asking for His mercy to be shown.

The white robes (6:11) . Here, as in 3:4-5, 4:4, and 7:9, the permanent clothing of all God's overcoming saints. And 19:8 explains further that this robe, of the finest linen, represents the righteousness of the saints. Of course, that righteousness comes by virtue of Jesus Christ, Who is our righteousness. Paul in II Corinthians 5:21 explains that this righteousness is not really of our making, but is acquired from Heaven. Philippians 3:9 assures us again that although we do "have" righteousness, its Source is outside us and beyond our capability to produce. So the robe is the reflection of Who Jesus is, not what we have done.

These victims of antichrist's rage are spirit beings at present. Their new body has not yet been given. John's eyes have been opened to the spirit world so effectively that he can see "souls". That creates a technical problem for us, because we see later when the resurrected bodies of the saints come back with Jesus, they are dressed in these white garments. But how can these "souls" be so dressed? We can only imagine that the robes are being kept in storage until

that day when their new bodies, for which they groan here, are manifested.

Seal 6 (6:12-17) . Without a doubt, the sixth seal is “**the end.**” From Matthew 24:15 on, there is also clearly a discussion of end time matters. And in Matthew 24:29 and following is the same pattern of events as here in Revelation: Heavenly signs. The earth in chaos. The coming to earth of Jesus. The day of His wrath. Saints with Him. All of this *follows* the persecution of believers during the Tribulation period.

The earthquake (6:12). Jesus pointed us to “earthquakes” in general, but the prophets, and John here, are singling out one enormous shaking at the very end of all things. **Isaiah** (2:19) saw a day when the Lord will shake the earth “mightily”. This will be no ordinary quake. **Ezekiel** (38:19) describes a “great earthquake” in the land of Israel, where “mountains shall be thrown down, steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.” Ezekiel mentions this as a part of the great northern invasion from “Rosh”, which some equate with World War III and/or Armageddon. More on this later . For sure, it is an end-time happening in Ezekiel’s eyes. It fits also with **Joel**, who in Joel 3:16 prophesies a shaking of heaven and earth, along with the light-diminishing phenomena of the heavens, mentioned also in this seal. And it matches the prophet **Haggai**, who is quoted by the writer of Hebrews: (Haggai 2:6, Hebrews 12:26) “Once more, I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and the dry land, I will shake all nations.”

As I said, **no ordinary earthquake**. It is mentioned here in the 6th seal, and in 8:5 in the 7th seal. But the 7th seal is nothing more than all 7 trumpets, which cover the same territory as the 6th seal.

If there is more than one earthquake in the book, the **second one** (though first in real time) seems to appear in chapter 11. 11:13 tells of a ’quake happening in the days of the 6th trumpet, in connection with the ascension of the “two witnesses” . But only six verses later, passing into the 7th trumpet, or the *end-of-all* phase again , there is another earthquake. In the first one (11:13), 7000 are killed. In the final one (11:19), further described in 16:18-19 as a part of the climactic bowl judgment (which also overlaps seals and trumpets), the events are as follows: “...there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. Now the great city [Babylon?] was divided into 3 parts, and the cities of the nations fell... and the mountains were not found.” (see Ezekiel above)

We will see in later close-ups how man and devil destroy much of the earth’s people and culture. But here is a case of God Himself intervening and **making a statement** unaided.

Shaking of the heavens (6:12-13) The “statement” of God is further punctuated in this ending scene by a spectacular show in the heavenly bodies: sun, moon, and stars. Never was an event more fully documented in God’s Word. Men like Isaiah (13:10, 24:23), Ezekiel (32:7), and Joel (2:10,31, 3:15) all saw a day when the brightness of things celestial would grow significantly dimmer. The same Spirit worked in them and in our Lord to point to that which John now describes. Jesus ties these events to His coming to earth, just after the Tribulation period (Matthew 24:29-30).

Later in the book we are given more details of how all these things work themselves out. In the trumpet days, 8:10, which take us backward into the seals , a “**star**” falls from heaven and does damage to the earth. We understand now the identity of “falling stars” as we still call them. These are meteors. Yes, they have fallen to earth before and will again. There are on the planet now over 100 craters that have been formed by the impact of giant meteors. Tons of

outer space debris comes into our atmosphere every day. Most of it is burned up to insignificant size. But on that day, the meteor showers normally confined to great distances away from the planet will be bombarding us. Not only that, but **1/3 of the “real” stars** (8:12) may be scheduled to “nova” , or burn out at that time. This, again, is a common phenomenon, but the timing of it will be seen to be very precise, to fit in with the show of wrath being made. A third manifestation of the “falling star” is **the angel** (9:1). We saw early on (1:20) how Jesus sees angels as “stars”. Whatever that may mean, we do see a star being given the key to the bottomless pit after he, the star, “falls from heaven to earth” (see on chapters 8 and 9).

Meteors, stars, angels, all falling in a concerted effort to demonstrate the power of an **angry God**.

Before a star totally burns out, it grows intensely hot. It would seem then that the “4th bowl” judgment of chapter 16 in its description of scorched men, followed by the “5th bowl” of darkness, is nothing more or less than a depicting of this very thing. Evil is having its way, and the light of God is not allowed to shine on the planet any longer. But the prophet foresaw this moment (Isaiah 60:19-20), and God has comforted us to let us know that the artificial light bearers that we have come to respect daily will one day be replaced by the light of His presence (21:23, 22:5). But we are way ahead of the story, and will cover these matters later.

The sky and the surface of the earth (6:14) . It was Isaiah who first (34:4) was given the picture that John now portrays by the same Spirit. A time when the host of heaven would be dissolved. A time when the heavens would roll up like a scroll. A time when the falling of stars would be as fruit from a fig tree. Peter, also before John, sees the heavens passing away with a great noise, the elements melting, the earth and its works burned up (II Peter 3:10).

There is something of a **dilemma** in timing here. Peter follows his description with talk of the “new heaven and new earth.” But later in Revelation, that newness is not scheduled until after Jesus has ruled for 1000 years (20:11-21:1). Which is it, at the coming of Jesus, or at the end of His reign, that we see the new heavens and new earth?

There is no question that this 6th seal is pointing to the coming again of Jesus. The event begun here will be further considered in chapter 19. So, we read that when He comes, the earth will definitely be **re-arranged** (“every mountain and island was moved out of its place”). But is the earth *annihilated* here? It seems , from talk of a “receding” sky that the heavens are surely shattered. But the earth seems to be ready for a *renewing*, rather than a *replacing*. There are still judgments to be rendered here, dead to be buried . One can read in Ezekiel 39 the fascinating account of how the first months of the Millennium will be spent! See also Amos 9:11-14.

On the other hand, in 20:11, at the end of the 1000 years, it seems there is an **abolishing** of this old planet altogether, “no place found” for it, and within a few verses there is a new one. We will examine this problem of sequence more as we come to the relevant chapters.

No place to hide (6:15-17) It would seem, that while men continue to seek a hiding place from Christ, He is engaged in ripping apart every such refuge. Note the use of the word “**wrath**” in 16 and 17. We discussed earlier that it is not meant for God’s children to be subjected to wrath . Whether bowl judgments targeted at the Devil’s crowd, or the ultimate wrath here, after we have been caught up, we believers shall never be the objects of the wrath of God.

Close-up :
The Jewish elect in the wilderness
(7:1-8, 14:1-5, 12:6, 12:13-16)

I'll say it again: We have already covered most of the **entire scope** of the Book of Revelation, that is, the Scroll in the hand of the Lamb, in one short chapter. By chapter 7, we have come to the end of human history this side of the 2nd coming. We will not advance beyond this moment until chapter 19. That means that everything that follows from chapters 7 through 18 is nothing more than a review and a close-up of what we have already seen. In chapters 7-18 we will learn the time frame of the seals, the political background, the state of the people of God (both Jewish and Christian) during this time, the origin of the trouble, God's preliminary judgments on it all, and more. But it is important to keep the understanding before us that with these six seals we have seen an outline of *most* of the Book.

Where do we go from here? Though chapter 7 begins, "after these things" , we need to understand, as with all such phrases in the book, that we are talking about the *sequence of visions* John saw, and not the *sequence of history* that took place. After the whirlwind tour of the Tribulation, John is now given a close-up, a piece of background, so that the setting of the Book starts coming into sharper focus. As you see above, I have linked the first portion of chapter 7 with events in chapters 12 and 14 where we will discuss these matters again. But, put all of these verses of chapters 7, 12, and 14 together, and here is the picture:

For three and one half years (12:6), a **"woman"** (12:1) is securely hidden by God (12:14) from a Dragon (12:9). She has a Child, whom the Dragon immediately attempts to destroy. She is taken to the wilderness by air (12:14). There, the Enemy makes an all-out attempt to destroy her also (12:15), fails (12:16) , and begins persecuting the other children of the woman (12:17). The woman is described much like the images of Joseph's dream , found in Genesis 37:9. "The sun, the moon, and 12 stars" can only be the family known as Israel, in its end-time form. Only Israel combines the activities said to be performed by the "woman" : she gives birth to the Messiah, gives birth to Messiah's followers and the "remnant", and hides awhile from the wrath of Satan.

Consider the promise of God through Hosea in this regard (2:14): "I will allure her, will bring her **into the wilderness**, and speak comfort to her." Also, Zechariah: (12:10) "I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for him as one mourns for his only son..."

This is why I suggest that this **final "elect" of Israel**, hidden away and spoken to by none other than Jesus Himself, are the 144,000. It seems that 7:1-8 is just another way of telling this wilderness story. We read here of the "sealing" of 144,000 special Jews. This happens early in the Tribulation before the "harm" caused by the destroying angels (**7:3**). So the entire sealing period could be the first three and one half years. Israel is called into the wilderness and into the "sealing" process in unbelief. This is why they cannot be a part of the great ingathering of the *second* half of chapter 7: They are not His yet! They are not ready to die the martyr's death yet. They do not have a song of salvation, yet. But they emerge from the wilderness (14:1-5) truly converted to Jesus.

Does not Paul help us here by saying that "even at this present time **there is a remnant**

according to the election of grace” ? And, “...hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” (Romans 11:5, 25). And in the second half of chapter 7, we see those Gentiles indeed being brought in!

The announcement (7:1-4) It is worth noting that there are four angels responsible for the preservation of earth. *Four*. And four corners and four winds. Could this “four-ness” correspond to the devastation of the four horsemen of chapter 6?

Timing of the sealing (7:3) We know that there is incredible “harm” done to the earth, sea, and trees in chapter 6, so it is clear that the sealing takes place before the worst of the Great Tribulation . To be specific, the trumpets, which take place during the latter seals, sound forth their judgments first on these very things mentioned here: earth, trees, and sea (8:7-9) ! So somewhere after man’s inhumanity to man brings the peoples of earth to war and poverty, and sometime before God Himself “hurts” the natural creation, the 144,000 are sealed.

What is the sealing (7:3)? Ezekiel talks of a “mark” placed on the foreheads of those who were truly caring Israelites, those who hated evil and were willing to intercede for their nation. Jesus Himself was “sealed”, or authorized, made publicly approved, by the Father. Through the words of the Baptist and through God’s sovereign power on the mountain of transfiguration, Jesus was “sealed” before His followers (John 6:27). Following in His train, we too are sealed by means of that same Spirit of God. We are set apart, with God’s special “mark” on our spirit from the day that Jesus comes into our lives. Paul is the messenger of this teaching: II Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13, 4:30. We assume that the sealing of these Jews will be similar to our own.

Who are the servants of God being sealed here (7:14)? Their number is 144,000, as in 12 tribes of Israel times 12,000 per tribe. This is a Jewish thing. This is the final remnant of Israel, drawn to Christ here, soon to be filled with the Spirit. Later, after the Gentiles are brought in, as in the last section of this chapter, these Jews come into their own. “And so, all Israel shall be saved” (Romans 11:26). God begins with the Jew and ends with him. Thank God, Gentiles are allowed in, but they must always remember that they were brought in because Israel failed to see Messiah at first. The Kingdom is not to be taken over by Gentile culture and thought, but will remain ever, Jewish. See further on this special group at the beginning of chapter 14.

The list (7:5-8) . The counting of Jacob’s 12 sons has always been a bit confusing. The original 12, in order of their birth, are: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin. Very little of this order is preserved in the final listing before us.

Notice that **Judah (7:5)**, from whom came the Messiah, is now first, fulfilling the prophecy about his favored status and praiseworthiness (Genesis 49:8). Firstborn **Reuben (7:5)** is second here. Numbers 7 and 8 of the originals, **Gad and Asher (7:5-6)**, are now 3 and 4. **Dan** is missing altogether, giving rise to the speculation that antichrist will be Jewish, and from that very tribe. I think it safer to look at the behavior of the tribe of Dan, described in the latter portion of the book of Judges, to discover why Dan might not be in favor now.

Naphtali (7:6) moves then from 6 to 5. **Manasseh (7:6)** is actually, with **Ephraim**, a grandson of Jacob, a son of Joseph. And though Manasseh appears next in this list, Ephraim is replaced by dad **Joseph (7:8)** , who is still in the 11th place! Joseph usually does not appear in a listing of tribes. Brothers **Simeon and Levi (7:7)** are 7 and 8, instead of 2 and 3. Levi’s

appearance, like Joseph's, is unusual, as that tribe was to be a special group of priests spread out over the entire nation. They were therefore not given territory of their own, except certain cities. To see them once more as a "normal" tribe lets us know that the Aaronic priesthood that stems from Levi, is now being replaced once and for all by the priesthood of Melchizedec, a type of Jesus in Genesis 14.

Issachar and Zebulun (7:7-8) retain their places as the last of Leah's children. And **Benjamin (7:8)**, born from dying Rachel, is still the final son, like his descendant Saul/Paul, "one born out of due time" (I Corinthians 15:8).

Close-up :

The persecuted Church

(7:9-17, 12:9-11, Daniel 7:25, 8:24)

The scene changes dramatically in the last half of chapter 7 (7:9-12). The 144,000 Jews are sealed on earth, before the main events of the Tribulation. But this latter scene seems Heavenly, and it is far more than Jews who are being blessed now, although saved Jews must be in their number. All nations are before the Lamb. John is quizzed as to their identity (7:13). When the apostle hesitates, the elder who asks him, also answers him (7:14): All of the multitude John sees, he is told, has come from the Great Tribulation.

Is this scene taking place at **the final rapture** at the coming of Jesus? The way John describes the crowd in 7:9 seems to point that way, though the Heavenly circumstances do not, necessarily. That is, it is difficult to say whether the Throne before which they stand (7:15) is still in Heaven or has come to earth (22:3). And, are they there by martyrdom? Well, we know that most of the assembled surely are. As their companions from the fifth seal (6:11), their robes are white. Their presence before the Throne is permanent and secure (7:15-16). The Lamb is to be their eternal Shepherd (7:17). The promise had been made at the 5th seal that more slaughtered saints were on the way. They were to wait "a little while." Here, after the fifth and presumably some of the sixth seal are being acted out, they arrive, and the prophecy is fulfilled. It would seem then that at least we are *near* the end of all things here.

Is chapter 14 a key to chapter 7? We will discuss it more when we get there, but consider for now that chapter 14 also begins with talk of the 144,000, who in that chapter are securely with Jesus around His Throne! Then there is mention of a Gospel that will be preached to all nations, just like the "all nations" assembled here in chapter 7. But in chapter 14, there is no question as to the timing. In rapid-fire succession we see the Gospel preached, Babylon down, Jesus descending, the earth harvested. All we know for sure is that the end of chapter 7, at least in part, is somewhere towards the end of the Tribulation, very near the final return of Christ.

There is one other way to see this scene. This could well be a gathering of the believers just after the Matthew 25 division of sheep and goats. That would explain why they are *all* around the Throne. It could be, as stated above, that the Throne has come to earth, as promised in 2:23. The dead in Christ have been raised. Then, those alive and remaining have been caught up, and return to earth with Jesus. And perhaps, at the forefront of the meeting are those who so unselfishly gave themselves as martyrs during the bloodbath of antichrist.

The picture of **persecuted believers (7:14)**, is a background shot of situations that prevail over the entire Tribulation period. Daniel saw it clearly even in his day, a king that would arise and destroy the holy people (Daniel 8:24). Let's piece together the other parts of

the puzzle and see what we come up with:

Following a brief episode of **heavenly conflict**, Satan and all of his own are deposited here on the planet (12:9). One speaking from Heaven tells how believers overcame Satan by Jesus' blood and their testimony (12:11). Tell me who but the Church does such things, by the way? The Jews, 144,000 of them, are in hiding, as Christ reveals Himself to them. So the **church takes the brunt** of Satan's hits, being faithful even to death. We will see later the exact manifestation Satan chooses to use for the end-time masquerade. But the players are obvious. Demons vs. Christians, that is, those who keep God's commandments and have the testimony of Jesus, the "other" children of the woman Israel. It is important to recall that the first Church was Jewish, that the Gospel was first preached to the Jews, and that when all is said and done, the tree to which we Gentiles have been grafted IS ISRAEL.

In summary then, Chapter 7 portrays two background pictures, two separate groups of people. The first is a selected group of end-time Israelites, who by their calling here to salvation will fulfill the ultimate purposes of the Lord for the Jewish people. God heals their backsliding, and loves them freely, as He promised He would do (Hosea 14:4). The second group is clearly Gentile, although already-saved Jews cannot be ruled out as one of the "nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues" gathered in on that day. This is the international church of the living God that has in the last days overcome the onslaught of Satan and has arrived at the very presence of God, never to leave Him again.

Having shown us where the story is going, the Spirit now takes us *back* into the dark days of the Tribulation, to focus in on the climactic disasters of the latter seals. We call this next series of events the "seven trumpets."