

**SPIRITS**  
**LAMPS**  
**SEALS**  
**ANGELS**  
**TRUMPETS**  
**THUNDERS**



**THOUGHTS**  
**Term 4 2021**

**7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**



**Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

This term we turn from Abraham, to whom the promise to bless all nations was given, to the culmination of that promise in the last days. We move from the letters to the seven churches to the fate of the universal church and indeed of the whole of the cosmos as it is revealed to us in groups of 7 visions. Indeed, as Revelation 4:1 says, we look into the open door of heaven. In a dazzling array of visions and images and events we see what the Lord God has in store for his people, for the world and for those who persists in their rebellion against him. As one writer has said, these passages are written “to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.”

May our Sovereign Lord, Jesus, who is indeed the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, grant to us understanding, encouragement and motivation as we read and study this section of his Word.

*Greg Holmes, September 2021*

Program

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1	Sun 10 Oct	4: 1-11	<i>A Throne in Heaven</i>	8
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RESOURCES

Please note that as many of you may be doing these 'solo' that this booklet entitled "Thoughts on Revelation 4-11" is available to everyone via the KAC website or through the office.

Aune, D.E. Revelation 1-5 (Word Biblical Commentary) (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1997)

**Barnett, P. Revelation – Apocalypse Now and Then (Reading the Bible Today) (Sydney South, Aquila, 2001)**

Beasley-Murray, G.R. "Revelation" in Carson, D.A.; France, R.T.; Motyer, J.A.; Wenham, G.J. (Eds) New Bible Commentary (21st Century Edition) (Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

Beale, G.K.; Campbell, D.H. Revelation: A Shorter Commentary (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2015)

Bewes, R. The Lamb Wins! A guided tour through The Book of Revelation (Ross-Shire, Christian Focus, 2000).

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Dever, M. "Revelation" in Promises Kept : The Message of the New Testament (Wheaton, Crossway Books, 2006)

Hendriksen, W. More than Conquerors (London, Tyndale Press, 1940).

Johnson, A.F. "Revelation" in Longman, Tremper III, and Garland, D.E. (Eds) The Expositor's Bible Commentary - Revised (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1990)

**Keener, C The NIV Application Commentary : Revelation (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2000).**

Kistemaker, S.J. Exposition of the Book of Revelation (New Testament Commentary) Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2001).

Morris, L, "Revelation" (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries) (IVP, Leicester, 1987).

Osborne, G.R. Revelation (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament) (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2002).

Peterson, E. Reversed Thunder (San Francisco, Harperone, 1991)

Wall, R.W. Revelation (Understanding the Bible) (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2000).

Wilcock, M. "The Message of Revelation: I Saw Heaven Opened" (The Bible Speaks Today) (Nottingham, IVP, 1975)

Wright, N.T. Revelation for Everyone (London, SPCK, 2011)

**Also, the outline of Book of Revelation (Part 1) on the Bible Project website.**

**<https://thebibleproject.com/all-videos/>**

There are also some very helpful talks and sermons that you can find at

<https://www.smbc.edu.au/resources/bibletalks-scripture/filter/revelation/>

<https://stebbes.org/resources/sermons/?esources%2Fsermons&biblebook=66&speaker=Vaughan%20Roberts&perpage=50>

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

It is probably worth my while explaining what I attempt to do in these 'notes'. My first work on them is to ensure that you can actually answer the questions. It is easy to ask questions that no-one is able to interpret. I then attempt to give some thoughts of my own on each question and then to bring to bear materials from my reading on the topic. Sometimes these are direct answers to the questions but, also sometimes, they are extra, I hope, relevant ideas.

It proves impossible in these studies to delve into all of the themes and implications of the material and I would encourage all people who lead or indeed do the studies to look more widely than the questions and allow Jesus' words to speak to our minds, hearts and lives..

### **THE SECTIONS OF THE STUDIES**

#### **Before You Start**

These are just suggestions for thought starters.

#### **Listen Carefully to ...**

It is good to read through the passage for the week at the start of each study. Each of these passages is relatively short so reading them aloud is worthwhile.

#### **The Big Picture**

It is important that as we look at Revelation we don't get too bogged down in the detail of the visions and end up not getting the overall impact.

These questions seek to get us thinking about the broad view.

#### **The Basics**

These look at the basic ideas in the passage.

#### **Connections**

As the heading suggests, these dig deeper into the themes of the passage or look more widely at Scripture. It is probably among these that you need to make some choices. Of course if you decide to have a go at them all I am sure it will be worthwhile.

#### **Impact**

It has been suggested that rather than think about how we **apply** the Scriptures we should ask how they **impact** us in our daily lives as Jesus' followers.

These Questions seek to get us to think about this.

*We need to make the rubber of the 'idea' hit the road of our lives, thoughts and actions. - One of the problems in writing 'application' or 'impact' type questions is not knowing where all the individuals in groups etc. are up to. If you can see a better application of the material - DO IT. - The important thing is to relevantly think about the impact the passage has on us.*

***Please note that my answers below are not the only 'correct\*' answers or what you are trying to get to in the study. I have set them out as a guide to my thinking only and an assistance to you.***

*\*They may indeed be incorrect or misguided.*

*These Notes are meant to be the start of the assistance I am willing to give in regard to the studies. If you need anything further DO NOT hesitate to contact me.*

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**7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders****Revelation.****SPECIFIC ADVICE FOR READING THE REVELATION**

You may easily find yourself in the company of most contemporary Christians, for whom the Revelation is difficult to read, mostly because we are so unfamiliar with John's medium of communication—apocalyptic literature with its bizarre imagery. Thus, along with knowing about the historical context and the way John works out his overall design two other items will greatly aid your reading of this marvelous book—(1) to take seriously John's own designation of his book as "the words of this prophecy" (1:3) and (2) to have some sense of how apocalyptic imagery works, even if many of the details remain a bit obscure.

By calling his work "the words of this prophecy," John is deliberately following in the train of the great prophets of the Old Testament, in several ways:

(1) He speaks as one who knows himself to be under the inspiration of the Spirit (1:10; 2:7; etc.).  
 (2) He positions himself between some recent past events and what is about to happen in the near future.

(3) He sets all forms of earthly salvation and judgment against the backdrop of God's final end-time judgments so that the fall of Rome is to be seen not as the end itself but against the backdrop of the final events of the end.

And (4) most important for good reading, John sees everything in terms of the *fulfillment* of the Old Testament. He has over 250 specific echoes of or allusions to the Old Testament so that every significant moment in his "story" is imaged almost exclusively in Old Testament language. This begins with the picture of Christ (1:12–18, with its extraordinary collage from Dan 7:9; 10:6; Ezek 43:2; et al.), climaxing in Revelation 5:5–6, where the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Gen 49:9), the "Root of David" (Isa 11:1), turns out to be a slain Lamb (from the Passover and sacrificial system). The church is imaged in the language of Israel in every possible way, beginning in Revelation 1:6, with its echoes of Exodus 19:6; its sins are expressed in terms of Israel's failures (Balaam/Jezebel), and its redemption in Revelation 7 is pictured first as a remnant of the twelve tribes and second as a fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, thus including the nations. So also the judgment against Rome (e.g., 14:8; 18:1–24) is expressed in the language of the prophetic judgments against Babylon (Isa 13–14; 21:1–10; 47; Jer 50–51), so much so that Rome is simply called "Babylon." The climax of the fulfillment is found in Revelation 22:1–5, with its restoration of Eden and total overturning of the curse. It is hard to imagine a more fitting way for the biblical story to end!

About John's use of apocalyptic imagery, you need to be aware of the following

(1) The imagery of apocalyptic is primarily that of *fantasy*—a beast with seven heads and ten horns; a woman clothed with the sun.

(2) John himself interprets the most important images (Christ, 1:17–18; the church, 1:20; Satan, 12:9; Rome, 17:9, 18), which give us our essential clues to the rest.

(3) Some of his images are well known and fixed—a beast coming out of the sea represents a (usually evil) empire; an earthquake represents divine judgment—while others are fluid and are used to evoke feelings as well as mental pictures.

(4) Visions are to be seen as wholes and not pressed regarding all of their details, that is, the details are part of the evocative nature of the imagery, but the *whole* vision is what counts.

If you keep these various matters in mind as you read, you should be able not only to make your way through the Revelation but begin to appreciate some of its utter majesty.

(From Fee, G.D., Stuart D. How to Read the Bible Book by Book (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2002)

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*A note on the approach taken here.*

There are a great variety of ways that this book of Revelation can be approached and a number of ‘isms’ that are associated with them.

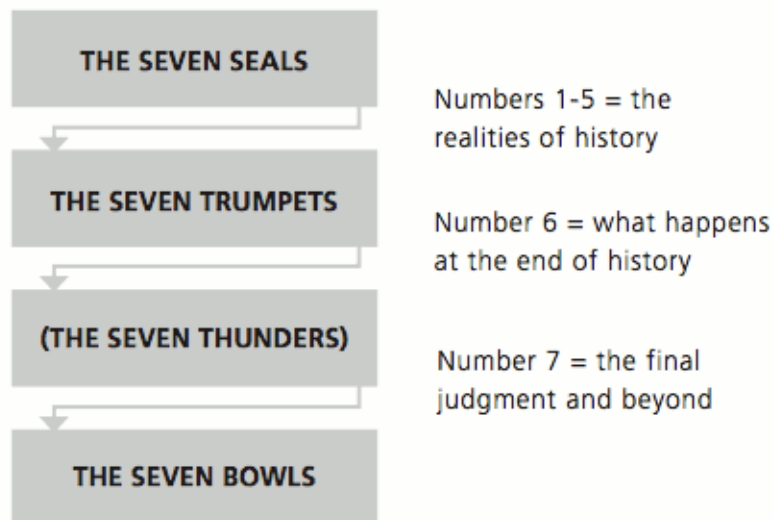
Throughout these studies we have tried to take a broad picture approach that looks at the main message for Christians of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century and now the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The details are meant to convey a picture, or a metaphor if you like, and most of them are not required to be nailed down to a precise meaning or time. The images used would have been familiar to the first readers but many are somewhat unfamiliar to us (except perhaps in fantasy novels or films). The times and numbers are generally symbolic and representative and not to be taken literally.

It is perfectly possible to get the important teachings of Revelation straight and right while remaining agnostic about some of the details.

In these studies I have taken the approach that the 7 seals, trumpets, etc. are not successive but each group represents human history from the time of Jesus’ first coming to his second. Tim Chester (2019) represents them like this:

**THE SEVENS**



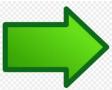

**THE “SEVENS” DO NOT FOLLOW ONE ANOTHER. THEY ARE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE SAME SEQUENCE OF EVENTS:**



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This page which is the same for each of the passages is just an alternative way of looking at the passages. It would be possible to use this method first and then look at some of the material in the ‘Thoughts’ for each passage as supplementary information.

This “Thoughts” booklet does not reproduce each of these pages.

<b>Revelation 4</b>		<b>1</b>
<b>The Throne at the Centre</b>		<i>Some Thoughts</i>
What shines from the Passage? 		
What questions does the passage raise? 		
What personal response can you see? 		
What are you prompted to pray about? 		

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# Study 1: Revelation 4 The Throne at the Centre

### **Before You Start**

***What are your impressions of the visions in Revelation? Why do you think God has seen fit to preserve them for us?***

This is just a discussion/meditation starter to enable you to consider what your expectations and impressions are of Revelation before we dig into the nitty gritty of John's vision(s).

### **Listen Carefully to Revelation 4**

Bewes (Lamb Wins): *"This is basic to all of John's message, ETERNITY. These next two chapters are given to prepare the reader for what lies ahead. We are taken behind the scenes of all that exists and happens. We come to the very centre of all power and peer into eternity itself!"*

### **The Big Picture**

#### **1. Note Chapter 1 of Revelation. Who is the 'central character'?**

**What is verse 3 telling us about the aim of the book?**

The one who stands among the 'seven golden lampstands' – Jesus Christ himself is the 'star' here in chapter 1 and throughout the rest of the book.

The purpose of the book is to bless those who read, hear and take to heart what is written. Because time is near.

Tim Chester: *"John has a message that has come to us through a five-link chain: from God to Jesus to an angel to John to us (Revelation 1:1-2)[2]. And if we "take to heart" this message, then it will bless us (v 3). (So if someone's interpretation of Revelation doesn't bless its hearers, then something is wrong.) What is this message that brings blessing?"*

#### **2. Consider what you remember of the thrust of the letters to the 7 churches in chapters 2-3.**

This is for discussion if you are in a group.

Tim Chester: *"The words to the seven churches are specific words of application for their situations. Each word ends with a call to be victorious (or overcome, ESV). The rest of the book equips us to overcome as it reveals heaven's perspective on history. But this big picture is applied to the specifics of the "battlefield" of each church in the word to that church. The churches are to remain faithful to Jesus in the face of opposition, false teaching, the attractions of wealth and the desire for social acceptance. The switch from one specific congregation to "the churches" at the end of each message indicates that each message is for all churches."*



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### **3. What do you think is the impression we are to get from Chapter 4?**

The scene dramatically changes. From the small, struggling, 7 Churches in Asia Minor to the wonder and glory of the heavenly throne room.

This is meant to be full of comfort, encouragement, and strength for the 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians (and for us). This is capital 'R' Reality. This is where the real action is. This is, as one writer has called it, the control room of the galaxy.

Glory and wonder are the impressions we are to get.

### **The Basics**

#### **1. Where is chapter 4 set?**

The heavenly throne room.

Keener (NIVAC): *"The "open" door in heaven (4:1) signifies what openings in heaven often signify, namely, God's revelation (11:19; 15:5; cf. Ezek. 1:1; Mark 1:10; John 1:51). John does not have to force his way into heaven, as some of his contemporaries thought they did; he is invited, in language that recalls God's call to Moses to receive his revelation: "Come up here" (Rev. 4:1; cf. Ex. 19:20, 24; 24:12; 34:2) recalls the Bible's first throne vision (Ex. 24:10–12; cf. also 19:24)."*

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *"Before John is a door standing open, the Greek perfect tense signifying that once open the door is now always opened; through Christ's atoning death we now have permanent access to heaven and to God."*

#### **2. Read what is at the centre of this vision.**

The One on the throne, the throne and the elders and creatures around the throne.

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *"What John sees is a throne in heaven: "There before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it" (v 2). Everything revolves around this throne. God and his reign (symbolised by his throne) are at the centre of the created world. John describes concentric circles of worshipping beings expanding out from the throne. The word "throne" occurs 19 times in chapters 4 – 5. Humanity is on the periphery. At the centre is the throne of God surrounded by the worship of heaven. We are not the centre of the world nor even of our own lives. God is at the centre. Nevertheless, the seven lamps which are the seven churches (1:20), are "in front of the throne" (4:5). The people of God are in his eye line."*

Bewes: *"God's throne speaks to us of eternity. Every other throne can be shaken – but never that of God. His throne is permanent and secure. He lives for ever and ever (v10). The praise of the living creatures is ceaseless. This is the great reassurance of the prophecy. 'God is in control.'"*

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Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *“With due reverence and in obedience to the second commandment no description of the enthroned one is given merely the colourful impression of a majestic presence.”*

### **3. What activity is taking place?**

In a word - worship (with a capital W)

### **Connections**

#### **1. Look at 1:10. What does this voice now say (4:1). Why is it significant that it is the same voice?**

This is the voice that commanded John to write this ‘letter’ in the first place.

It is important as we go on through Revelation that we do not miss the fact that this is one long letter to, initially, the seven churches in Asia-Minor. It is too easy to divorce chapters 2 and 3 – the letters to the 7 churches from this far more ‘exotic’ stuff here in chapters 4 and following from the situation of these specific churches in their 1 century setting. Revelation is all words of encouragement and warning to them in the first place and then to Christians down the ages.

#### **2. Re-read v2-3 and note Isaiah 6:1–5; Ezekiel 1:4–28; Daniel 7:9–14. What sort of place is God’s throne room? What description of God do these passages give?**

In fact there is very little actual description of God himself. Daniel and Ezekiel describe a man-like being.

Isaiah can only describe the train of his robe and Jeremiah describes the floor so we know where he was looking.

Morris (TNTC): *“Ezekiel has an account of God on his throne (Ezek. 1:26–28), a passage to which this shows resemblances, though John’s account is marked by greater reserve. He uses suggestion rather than description to convey the majesty and unfathomableness of God. In particular he frequently refers to the worshipping host of heaven. God is usually made known to us by contact with those who know him rather than by direct vision.”*

Barnett: *“With due reverence and in obedience to the second commandment no description of the Enthroned One is given, merely the colourful impression of a majestic presence.”*

#### **3. What impression do you get of this place?**

It is a place of great splendor and great power.

Keener (NIVAC): *“THE GREATNESS OF GOD. One seeking to digest or communicate this chapter should not bog down in the details of most of its background, important as they are for understanding the details of John’s portrait. One should instead place all the details (expounded in the context of*

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*their primary Old Testament background) in the broader perspective of their function—to reveal the greatness of God’s court, hence, his own greatness. Thus, they also reveal a striking contrast with the pretence of the earthly ruler’s arrogant pomp. The text invites us to worship, today no less than at its first reading in Ephesus. It also invites us to relinquish our fear of human grandeur, which pales before the majesty of the eternal God with whom we have become intimate.”*

**Impact**

- 1. What does this chapter say about our gatherings to worship God?**
- 2. Pray 4:8b and 11 as praise to our God.**

Together they look like this:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”

....

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

This is true praise – prayer acknowledging the greatness of God.

Barnett: *“Worship is the expression of agreement by the people of God about the truth of God.”*

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *“So we, the people of God gather week by week to express the double beat rhythm of evangelical proclamation and hearty worship of the triune God who has redeemed us.”*

- 3. Tim Chester – ‘Revelation For You’: “When you turn on your television or go online, what do you see? What messages, priorities and values are being conveyed? In what ways do these conflict with the gospel of Jesus Christ?” Discuss.**

We live in a world that is very inwardly focused. It seems to me that the COVID pandemic has made us more so. We are focused on our health, or bodies, being safe, being careful and being wary. We, possibly quite naturally lose something of the bigger reality that is pictured here in Revelation 5 and in the rest of Revelation.

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *“In Revelation 4:1 John says: “After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.’” John is showing us a different reality, or rather, a different version of our reality. It’s as if we’re seeing reality from the other side. We’re being flipped inside out. We’re given the view from*

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*above in addition to our view from below. The normally unseen world that exists side by side with the seen world becomes visible in John's vision."*

*Bewes (Lamb Wins): "Behind all that we see happening in this world - the mistakes and sins of fallen, rebellious mankind - God is steadily working his purpose out. He has the ultimate rule; this is basic to the message of revelation."*

To note

*Beale (Revelation) "The vision John has is so closely related to that of Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days and Son of man (Dan. 7:9-14) that we must conclude he saw much the same thing, was aware of it, and recorded it deliberately with that similarity in mind. Note the following points of comparison:*

*The prophet "looks" (Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:1).*

*He sees a throne in heaven with God sitting on it (Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:2).*

*God's appearance is described (Dan. 7:9; Rev. 4:3).*

*There is fire before the throne (Dan. 7:9-10; Rev. 4:5).*

*"Myriads of myriads" of heavenly beings surround the throne (Dan. 7:10; Rev. 5:11).*

*Book(s) are opened (Dan. 7:10; Rev. 5:1-5).*

*A divine figure approaches the throne and receives a kingdom which will last forever (Dan. 7:13-14; Rev. 5:5-13).*

*This kingdom consists of all peoples, nations, and tongues (Dan. 7:14; Rev. 5:9).*

*The prophet experiences distress on account of the vision (Dan. 7:15; Rev. 5:4).*

*The prophet receives wisdom concerning the vision from one of the heavenly beings (Dan. 7:16; Rev. 5:5).*

*The saints are given authority to reign over a kingdom (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27; Rev. 5:10).*

*The vision concludes with mention of God's eternal reign (Dan. 7:27; Rev. 5:13-14).*

*There are also significant similarities to things Ezekiel saw in his initial vision: four living creatures (Ezek. 1:5; Rev. 4:6), a sea of crystal (Ezek. 1:22; Rev. 4:6), and a throne surrounded by fire on which God is seated (Ezek. 1:26-28; Rev. 4:1-5)."*

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Study 2: Revelation 5  
**“Worthy is the Lamb”**

**Before You Start**

***What images or metaphors do you think of when you consider Jesus?***

Again, this is for consideration or for discussion. The ‘gentle Jesus, meek and mild’ image is still very prevalent in our society, as is the ‘baby in a stable’ as we come up to Christmas. Further many people would think of him as just a great teacher. But that, as this chapter reinforces, is not the full story.

**Listen Carefully to Revelation 5**

**The Big Picture**

1. **“Chapter 4 is like the scenery of a stage. In chapter 5 the drama begins.” - Tim Chester (Revelation For You) What is the reason for the drama?**

There seems to be a task, a vital task, to be performed; there is a scroll\* to be opened, but there is no one worthy to perform it. This produces great grief.

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *“We’re right to weep when we see the brokenness of our world on the television news or in the lives of our friends. But we’re also right to sing when by faith we see the triumph of the crucified Lamb.”*

Morris (TNTC): *“No-one ... could (oudeis edynato)’ signifies complete impotence. The possibility is reduced to vanishing point as region after region is found wanting. No angel in heaven, no saintly man on earth, no prophet in the realm of the departed was sufficient for this.”*

\*Bewes (Lamb Wins): *“The following chapters in the Book of Revelation indicate that it is the scroll containing the secret of our world’s affairs and its history.”*

2. **Who provides the solution?**

Well, it seems to be a ‘Lion’ and then it is a ‘Lamb’, and indeed a lamb that looks like it has been slain.

This Lion/Lamb is the ‘worthy’ one. The emphasis being that this one alone is worthy despite a cosmos wide search this one alone is worthy and able.

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *“... only here in the whole of scripture is the anointed one called ‘the Lion.’”*

Beale (Revelation): *“John is taken up to the throne room of God, where he sees Christ enthroned along with the Father. The vision shows how Christ’s exhortation to each of the churches to overcome is based on the fact that Christ himself has already overcome (5:5).”* Note 3:21

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### The Basics

#### 1. How is the lamb described?

First, he is described as the Lion of Judah. Then the physical description is given as...

*...a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne.*

*The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.*

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *“Nothing could be more subversive. Instead of the mighty beasts of imperial power, we have a lamb. Instead of a victorious general, we have one who has been slain. Instead of the power, glory and wisdom of empire, we have the weakness, shame and folly of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18 – 2:5).”*

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *“The Lamb is at once both crucified and powerful. John appears to have in his mind fixed on evangelical realities about Jesus (namely his death and resurrection) which he portrays symbolically as the Lamb’s death wound on the one hand, and by its seven horns and seven eyes on the other.”*

#### 2. Why is the lamb ‘WORTHY’?

Note verse 5: He *has triumphed*.

And verse 9:

*because you were slain,  
and with your blood you purchased for God  
persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.*

#### 3. Note the words of praise directed to the Lamb? What do they tell us about him?

These are in v9,10,12 and, with the LORD included, v13.

You might want to pause and praise God and Jesus in these terms.

They emphasise the point that he was slain, giving his blood to bring people from all the world to relationship with God.

And he is worthy to be praised equally with the one who sits on the throne, God the Father. And Amen to that.

Beale (Revelation): *“Even as the main point of ch. 4 was the giving of glory to God, so the main feature of ch. 5 is the same giving of glory to the Lamb, even by those who have rejected him. The elders glorified God because he is the sovereign Creator of all things (4:11). This sovereign Creator is also, together with the Lamb, praised in 5:13 because of what he has done to redeem his creation.”*

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### Connections

- 1. Genesis 49:8-12 Speaks of the 'Lion of Judah' (v5) What is said about him in Genesis and here? Isaiah 11:1-10 speaks of 'the root of David'. How does Jesus fulfill both these prophecies?**

In Genesis as Jacob (Israel) blessed Judah he spoke of him as a lion and prophesied that Judah will be a ruler, basically forever.

In Isaiah it is the root of Jesse (who was David's Father) who will triumph and from him will come the Branch who will rule with righteousness in a perfected creation.

- 2. What is the importance of the 'Lion' being a 'Lamb', indeed a slain Lamb?**

At least partly the contrast is there to make us pay attention.

Lambs were always part of the sacrificial system (mentioned as such over 80 times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers) and were the representatives of the people in the Passover and Jesus is referred to as 'the lamb of God' (John 1:28,36 and note 1 Corinthians 5:7 and 1 Peter 1:19).

Significantly Christ is called the lamb 28 times in Revelation.

- 3. What does this chapter add to the picture of Jesus we see as the wandering Rabbi (teacher) in Palestine?**

This one, this Jesus, is no mere travelling guru, he is indeed God's King – the only one worthy to open the scroll of God's purposes. He is to be praised as God is.

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *"It might appear that Christianity is yesterday's news, that science has rendered Jesus irrelevant. But God is on the throne. On earth, in history, Jesus looks like a slaughtered lamb. But in heaven he is enthroned, and one day he will be enthroned on earth."*

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *"When earthbound men want symbols of power, they conjure up mighty beasts and birds of prey. Russia elevates the bear, Britain the lion, France the tiger, the United States the eagle - all of them ravenous. It is only the Kingdom of heaven that would dare to use as its symbol of might not the lion for which John was looking but the helpless lamb and at that a slain lamb."*

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *"It might appear that Christianity is yesterday's news, that science has rendered Jesus irrelevant. But God is on the throne. On earth in history Jesus looks like a slaughtered lamb. But in heaven he is enthroned, and one day he will be enthroned on earth."*

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

### **Impact**

- 1. Tim Chester (Revelation For You): “But the emotional force of chapter 5 is that conquering through death is real victory.” Consider or discuss.**

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *“Although severely disadvantaged and entirely powerless within their society, they (God’s faithful people) actually reign on earth; they reign in the way Christ reigned during the crucifixion; it was a reign of courage, of love, of truth, and of hope - qualities that come from God himself and which are greater than death. The person possessed of these qualities though poor and powerless, has the dignity of Christ the King”*

- 2. Jesus is the only one worthy to open the seals of the scroll of history. Do we trust Jesus to handle the things in our life which we consider most private/precious?**

For consideration and discussion.



## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

### Study 3: Revelation 6 “Hide Us”

#### **Before You Start**

***Consider what it means that God is a righteous Judge.***

This is a question we need to keep considering as we work our way through this, often confronting, series of visions.

We know God is love but to be God he must be just – how does that work.

#### **Listen Carefully to Revelation 6**

#### **The Big Picture**

##### **1. What is your overall impression after reading Revelation 6?**

Consider and discuss first.

I must say it is all rather overwhelming, strange and challenging.

It is worth considering thought that this is what the world is like. War and Conquest and rampant inflation, sword, famine, plague and wild beasts always seem to be threatening mankind.

But John’s visions say something or someone is in control of all this.

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *“If you’re reading chapters 6 – 9 in the comfort of your home in a quiet suburb, then they may well seem surreal. But if you stand back and view them from a wider perspective, you will find they capture the turmoil of history—they feel all too real.”*

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *“Human destiny is about to be revealed. Four sequences will pass before us dealing respectively with tyranny, chaos, persecution, and destruction. These sequences however are not to be understood as occurring consecutively in history rather they occur concurrently”*

##### **2. What role does Jesus (the Lamb) play in the events we see in this chapter?**

The Lamb is the one who opens each of the seals of the scroll and releases the horses etc. – he is in control of the entire sequence of events.

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *“According to John, the horses emerged from the scroll not at their own volition but because the Lamb breaks the seals on the scroll and God's faithful living creatures issue the command, ‘Come.’”*

Bewes (Lamb Wins): *“It is the Church that is particularly concerned to know the contents of the scroll, as we were reminded in chapter 5. Furthermore, it is the Church’s divine leader who alone is qualified to break the seals and reveal the contents of the scroll. If it is Christ who oversees the unfolding events of*

**7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

*history, then his people may take heart, however forbidding the events that take place."*

Keener (NIVAC): *"This passage underlines the recognition that God is sovereign over history; terrible things may happen that seem beyond explanation, but on the larger scale God is using such forces to bring history to its climax. ... The modern experiment to overcome the need for "superstition" and religion has failed. The modern world's values have proved inadequate to confront the threats our world experiences; continuing wars, weapons of massive destruction, and other plagues have hurled modern humanity "into an apocalyptic age, without a faith in Christian eschatology." Terror with teleology (an understanding that there is an 'end') can only remind us of our mortality, our need to depend on someone greater than ourselves. Terror without teleology produces despair."*

Beale (Revelation): *"Christ has received all authority from the Father and taken up his rule over the kingdoms of the earth (1:5; 2:26–27; 5:1–14). The first four seals show how this authority extends even over situations of suffering sent from the hand of God to purify the saints and punish unbelievers. Examples of such suffering have been alluded to in the letters of chs. 2–3. Some Christians may have wondered if Christ really was sovereign over disastrous circumstances, such as Nero's mass persecution on so cruel a scale following the fire of Rome in AD 64. Rev. 6:1–8 is intended to show that Christ rules over such an apparently chaotic world and that suffering does not occur indiscriminately or by chance. This section reveals, in fact, that destructive events are brought about by Christ for both redemptive and judicial purposes. It is Christ sitting on his throne who controls all the trials and persecutions of the church."*

**3. What time frame is encompassed?**

There are plenty of views which disagree, but I think that this whole group of 7 seals (and the other groups of seven later) represent events of the whole time between Jesus first coming and his second coming.

Bewes (Lamb Wins): *"In this, our 'parallelist' interpretation, we believe ourselves to be looking at the total age spanned by Christ's first and second comings. It is the age which included the Roman Empire of John's day, but it also includes our generation."*

**The Basics****1. What do the first four seals unleash?**

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

With the terrors that they bring.

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

This is God's judgement on the earth.

Keener (NIVAC): *"To apply these images we should translate them into images that would evoke an equivalent impact today. Wars, famines, and plagues remain terrifying matters today. To evoke afresh the message of 6:1–8, we should embrace the full horror of the vision, then contemplate that God is sovereign in these judgments. By revealing his anger against the world's sin he both serves notice on oppressors and mercifully prevents us from becoming too comfortable with a world system destined to pass away (1 John 2:15–17). God is sovereign in history, even over sufferings; they are the seals, the marks of divine witness to the veracity of his promises."*

Beale (Revelation): *"This [fourth] rider generally summarises the previous three (of being conquered, the sword, and famine, all of which would include to some extent death), and adds one more (the plague of beasts). He uses the preceding three woes to bring death. But it is clear that they do not always result in death (see, for instance, the third horseman). Uppermost in mind are the antagonistic actions of Satan's forces, which are aimed at both the community of faith and unbelievers (as 6:9–10 reveals)."*

### **2. What is the result of opening the 5<sup>th</sup> seal?**

Attention is directed to the martyrs who are sheltering under the altar.

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *"The martyrs are each given a white robe, symbolising their vindication and victory (v 11). The world made a judgment against them, but God makes a counter-judgment for them."*

Their cry is for justice and vengeance.

God says 'wait' – there are yet more to join you.

So too we must wait.

Keener (NIVAC): *"God's time is not always our time, but even if we do not live to see the fulfillment of all our prayers, we can die in hope that God will bring about the things he has promised. After the saints' cries, God judges the world (6:12–17); despite the arrogant fantasies of God's enemies (Prov. 18:11), human power will provide no refuge in that day when the true King executes justice on the entire social order from Caesar on down (6:15)."*

Beale (Revelation): *"On waiting. The heavenly saints are pictured as patiently repeating the Psalmist's frequent cry, "How long?" Scripture says that God's ways are not our ways, and certainly his timing is often not our timing. How do we cope with the pressures of living in a society accustomed to instant gratification? What steps can we take to refashion our thinking along the lines of God's eternal gratification? How long are we prepared to wait for a return on our spiritual investment? Do our churches buy into programs designed to*

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

*produce instant results? Do we give up witnessing after a few attempts? How many missionaries (such as those in China, Korea, or many other nations) spent a lifetime with little fruit only to see an enormous harvest after their death? What would have happened if they had given up? Do we express patience by resting in God's understanding, which surpasses ours?"*

### **3. And the sixth seal?**

Great 'natural' upheaval.

This is somewhat prefigured in what happened when Jesus died on the cross. (Matthew 27:50-51; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44-45))

These events are similarly predicted in Jesus' end-time discourses. (Note Mark 13:24-27)

### **4. Against whom is God's wrath (v16-17) directed?**

Essentially it is those who have remained in rebellion against God and outside of a saving relationship with him.

## **Connections**

### **1. Read Nahum 1:7-8? Where is it safe to hide? Note Revelation 6:17**

It is safe to hide in what Martin Luther called, in his classic hymn, 'a safe stronghold' – in God. (You may know it as 'A Mighty Fortress')

*A safe stronghold our God is still,  
A trusty shield and weapon;  
He will help us clear from all the ill  
That hath us now overtaken.*

God is our refuge.

Even asking the caves to collapse and seal off the outside will not work. And certainly, hiding did not work for Adam and Eve in the garden.

The refuge is under the altar in the throne room. (6v9)

### **2. Note Zechariah 1:8-17; Isaiah 34:4 and Joel 2:31 and the similarity of the images here to those in Revelation 6.**

God's plan is always the same – he, from the beginning, has purposed to bring his judgement on those who stand against him.

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

### **Impact**

#### **1. What does this chapter say to our comfortable church complacency?**

Well ....

The question arising from v11 is, are you willing, if it comes to it, to be part of the filling up the number of those who have been killed for their faith?

#### **2. What is to be our attitude when being Christian is difficult and wearying?**

For consideration and discussion.

Perseverance – which is one of the prime messages of the whole book of Revelation.

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *“Today the sun, moon and stars have been replaced by money, sex and power in humanity’s list of favoured deities, but one day these too will be swept aside. After the opening of the sixth seal we are left with a haunting question: who will be left after all this chaos and carnage—who can stand?”*

Beale (Revelation): *“On the defeat and victory of believers. How can it be said that the apparent defeat of believers (in their suffering or death) is in truth their victory? Do we find it hard to see into the ways of God because at least in the western world we see things too much from the perspective of this world only? How does that limit our ability to understand the purposes of God? Reflect again on the truth expressed in Hebrews 11 concerning those heroes of faith who suffered and died.”*

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

### Study 4: Revelation 7 “A Great Multitude”

#### **Before You Start**

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): “... After the opening of the sixth seal we are left with a haunting question: Who will be left after all this chaos and carnage—who can stand?”

#### **Who can be saved? – Consider and Discuss**

The opening of the first six seals raises doubts about the whole human race. How does one come face to face with a perfect God and live? Who can do this? In reality, only one man – but, as a result of his sacrificial death, he brings lots of ‘friends’ with him.

#### **Listen Carefully to Revelation 7**

#### **The Big Picture**

##### **1. In broad strokes what is happening here?**

In two words – Salvation and Worship.

There is a pause. It gives us a glimpse behind the scenes we have been viewing which in themselves are a glimpse of the heavenly reality behind events in our world.

##### **2. To whom do all these people belong (v4-9)? How is this signified?**

There is a different kind of seal here. It is the seal that gives protection from the full effects of the judgment to those who are described as the ‘servants of our God’ and later as those ‘who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’

In short these are all the Christian saints.

Bewes (Lamb Wins): “How can you tell if you are sealed? There are a number of telltale signs! Are you someone who has a trust in Jesus Christ, and a love for him? Do you find yourself more and more wanting to meet with others who are in his church? Does the truth of God exert an increasing, magnetic pull on you? Do you find yourself in distress when you fall into the old, wrong habits? Is it difficult, living as a Christian and fighting against evil? If the answer is yes, it's a good sign!”

##### **3. What are all these people doing?**

Worshiping God, serving him.

This is reminiscent of chapters 4 and 5.

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

### The Basics

#### **1. Why are the four angels restrained?**

They are restrained in order for the 'multitude' of 'servants' to be saved.

#### **2. Why 144,000? How many altogether? What 'sorts'?**

It, of course, represents 12,000 from each of the tribes of Israel (the people God chose to carry his promise (remember Abraham and Genesis 12:1-3). Then there is the uncountable multitude (again remember Gen 13:16; 15:5; 32:12) from every nation, tribe people and language.

There is, understandably, much discussion about the nature of the 144,000 and the 'multitude' and their relationship to each other. Suffice it to say that there are lots and lots of people saved to serve the living God.

Beale (Revelation): *"... all Satan's followers bear his mark or name, and all the Lamb's followers must bear the Lamb's mark or name—hence, all believers in Christ throughout the ages are sealed and must be included in the one hundred and forty-four thousand."*

Bewes (Lamb Wins): *"Let's be careful about numbers in the apocalypse. the revelation is intended to inspire, not to bemuse!"*

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *"This number like others in the Revelation, is symbolic not literal. If this number is to be taken literally then so must others. But ... to ignore the symbolism of the Revelation is to destroy its message and to invite weird interpretations. The point John is making here is that godly Hebrews under the old covenant enjoy the eternal protection of God and are at no disadvantage compared to believers under the new covenant."*

#### **3. Why white robes?**

Well, because they have been washed in the 'blood of the Lamb'

That is, they have been brought into right relationship with Jesus by his sacrificial, substitutionary death.

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *"Their white robes and palm branches both symbolise their victory over opposition and adversity and their fidelity to the Lamb."*

#### **4. What is 7:15-17 promising/foreshadowing?**

Heaven – Paradise – a return to Eden.

We will get to all this wonderful stuff again in Chapter 21

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *“The horrors of the great tribulation, as depicted by the six seals, would have been immediately understood by John's readers, and are followed by the quietness and goodness of life in the presence and under the protection of God. As we will see, much of this description will be repeated in the final chapters when John speaks about the new Jerusalem.”*

### **Connections**

**1. Read Exodus 12:21-23. How is this like what happens in the early part of this chapter?**

Here, in the institution of the Passover, we see God’s people ‘sealed’ from the effects of the judgement to come on Egypt by the swipes of lamb’s blood on the doorway.

Lamb’s blood!!!

Beale (Revelation): *“This mark protects them spiritually and likely also physically from the coming judgment. This is comparable to the mark of blood on the doors of the Israelites so that they would be protected from God’s judgment on Egypt (Exod. 12:7, 13, 22–28). This becomes significant when we note that this mark protects believers during the period of the trumpet and bowl plagues, which, as we shall see, are closely modelled on the plagues of Egypt.”*

**2. Ephesians 1:13. How is this seal connected to the one in this chapter?**

Well, it is the same one. God seals us as his – not a visible seal but a spiritual one.

Keener (NIVAC): *“In any case, the seal does function to attest ownership (Isa. 44:5), and its title contrasts with what is merely a “mark” (Rev. 13:16–17). The most important source for the image is Ezekiel 9, where God marks the righteous remnant to protect them from his judgments. God will also set a sign among the surviving remnant of his people and make them witnesses for his glory among the nations (Isa. 66:19).”*

**3. Why this pause, here, in the narrative?**

Remember, this book (letter) is meant to be an encouragement to these first century Christians that God is the one who is in control and has their best interests in mind. So, often in the book, there is a pause in the ‘flow’ to assure God’s people that they have not been forgotten in all this seeming chaos.



## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

Keener (NIVAC): *“Many parenthetical interludes in Revelation (e.g., 14:1–5; 15:2–4; 20:4–6), especially hymns (12:10; 19:1–8), also concern the protection or salvation of the righteous, placing the judgment scenes in an encouraging context. Judgment serves a redemptive purpose, not only to invite repentance from the disobedient (9:20–21) but to vindicate the righteous oppressed (6:10).”*

### **Impact**

**1. For what is God praised in this chapter?**

Salvation in the main but also glory, wisdom, power, strength.

**2. Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *“How should the vision of every nation united by the Lamb affect our attitude to people from different ethnic backgrounds?”***

Consider and discuss

**7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

Study 5: Revelation 8:1-5  
**“The Seventh Seal”**

**Before You Start**

*How do you pray about the rampant injustice and cruelty in our world?*

For reflection and discussion.

**Listen Carefully to Revelation 8:1-5**

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *“The Revelation, both here and elsewhere, paints life on earth in endarkened hues. It does not view life in a romantic way. Nonetheless it is not a council of despair: ultimately it is a message of hope. Although apocalyptic in style it depicts life within history with both realism and insight.”*

**The Big Picture**

**1. How does this chapter open?**

The Lamb opens the seventh seal.

Then there is half an hour of silence.

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *“When the seventh seal is finally opened there is silence in heaven for half an hour (Revelation 8:1)—a moment as dramatic as all the slaughter and fireworks of chapter 6. In the Old Testament the world is silenced by God (Isaiah 23:2; 41:1; Habakkuk 2:20; Zechariah 2:13). When God’s judgment is revealed, we have nothing to say. (Romans 3:19)”*

Beale (Revelation): *“About half an hour might not refer so much to the precise temporal duration of the silence (about) but figuratively emphasise the suddenness and unexpectedness of a decreed judgment...”*

**2. How is this chapter related to Chapters 6 and 7?**

Both the fifth seal (6:9-11) and the ‘pause’ of chapter 7 allow the saints time to pray.

Here it is the prayers of the saints that are offered as incense and then ‘judgement’ on the earth.

The ‘How long ...?’ of 6:10 is sort of answered.

**3. What are we left waiting for at the end of verse 5?**

To put it tritely – what happens next?

There has been mention of another 7 – this time trumpets (8:2).

**The Basics**

**1. Who is the ‘He’ who opens the 7<sup>th</sup> seal?**

Remember it is the lamb ‘who is worthy’ – the slain lamb of chapter 5 who is opening the seals. Jesus is finishing his work.

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

### **2. What are the various angels in these verses doing?**

Verse 1 has seven angels who are given trumpets which they simply hold.

In v2 an 8<sup>th</sup> angel has a censer, which holds the prayers of the saints. He offers these to God and then hurls the censer, now 'filled with fire from the altar' hurls it on the earth with disastrous consequences.

### **3. What happens with the prayers of God's people?**

Morris (TNTC): *"This is not an unrelated parenthesis. John means us to see that the prayers of God's people are supremely important. Even the cataclysmic judgments which follow are held up till these prayers have been offered. Indeed in a sense it is these prayers that set the judgments in motion (v. 5)."*

### **Connections**

#### **1. Read Isaiah 23:2; 41:1; Habakkuk 2:20; Zechariah 2:13 and Romans 3:19.**

#### **What is the importance of silence in these passages?**

The silence represents an expectant wait.

Morris (TNTC): *"And the praises of angels give way to silence so that the saints may be heard. It is also possible that we should think of the silence as resulting from a sense of awe at the presence of God (cf. Hab. 2:20). He is about to launch severe judgments on people. All heaven remains silent."*

#### **2. It is confronting, but where do the judgments hurled on the earth in v5 come from?**

The judgements are the answers to the prayers of the saints. (Again note 6:10)

Keener (NIVAC): *"God is sovereign, but in his sovereign plan he has chosen to make the prayers of his people part of the exercise of his will. As Beasley-Murray puts it, it appears "that God has willed that the prayers of his people should be part of the process by which the kingdom comes." Or as Eugene Peterson notes:*

*While conflicts raged between good and evil, prayers went up from devout bands of first century Christians all over the Roman empire. Massive engines of persecution and scorn were ranged against them. They had neither weapons nor votes. They had little money and no prestige.*

*But they did have prayer. That prayer had the power to shape the course of human history!"*

Beale (Revelation): *"These verses present us with the effects of the prayers of the deceased saints pictured in 6:9–11. The power of these prayers seems to be related to the sacrificial witness of their lives. Do our prayers come out of a sacrificial life, or do we come asking God only to throw us life-preservers to*

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

*rescue us from our own foolishness? The prayers of the saints as pictured there focus on the holiness and truthfulness of God and a desire for that to be manifested in the execution of his justice. Are our prayers directed toward obtaining benefit for ourselves or glory for God?"*

### **Impact**

- 1. How can we as Christians pray well about the injustice, cruelty and inequality in our world knowing that the answer may involve God's judgement on some people?**

The old saying about how we separate the sinner from the sin comes into play here.

We should be praying for the salvation of the sinner, the individuals involved, who our God wants to save, but nevertheless judgement must rightly come on those who refuse to accept God's salvation, who refuse to repent and continue in their sin.

God is Love and he is Just – he will act according to his nature and purpose and it is right that we should pray for him to be true to his character.

- 2. What does this chapter say about the efficacy of your prayers?**

It reminds us that God hears and when we pray for justice and for right judgment then God will, in the end, act.

Keener (NIVAC): *"The sufferings of God's people invite his intervention, even if his time is not always our time (Ex. 2:23–25; Luke 18:7). What takes place in heaven clearly affects what occurs on earth (Rev. 8:5), and though we cannot always see the processes, many judgments come in response to human prayers."*

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *"When you pray for justice, the ultimate answer may be the final judgment. When you pray for peace, the ultimate answer may be the reign of the Lamb. When you pray for healing, the ultimate answer may be a resurrected body. When you pray for joy, the ultimate answer may be the wedding feast of the Lamb."*

- 3. Jude 23 tells us to 'save others by snatching them from the fire'. What from Revelation 8:1-5 should motivate us to tell others about Jesus?**

Note the content of the censer in v5

In his sermon on evangelism in our recent 'Discipleship' series, Aiden, our Assistant Minister, reminded us of this verse and that we should be concerned to warn people around us of what will happen if they refuse to acknowledge Jesus and place themselves under his rule.

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

### Study 6: Revelation 8:6 - 9:21 “One Third”

#### **Before You Start**

*How do you see the place of our Church in the world around it? Consider and discuss.*

We live in a world where community attitudes to the church and to Jesus' teaching are at best ambivalent and I suspect are becoming more and more antagonistic to any moral stand we might make.

#### **Listen Carefully to Revelation 8:6 - 9:21**

This is a long section, difficult to comprehend and confronting in its scope and scale. Yet we need to take it seriously. This is God's righteous judgement in action and, as we see in 9:20-21, it has a purpose.

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *“After the silence the seven angels are given seven trumpets (Revelation 8:2, 6). We're about to embark on another sequence of seven. The seven seals, the seven trumpets (and the seven bowls that we'll meet in chapter 16) do not describe different periods, taking place one after another in sequence. They are parallel accounts. They describe the same period—history is leading up to and including the return of Christ. It's as if history is being replayed from different perspectives.”*

Keener (NIVAC): *“Each part of the Bible is useful for teaching (2 Tim. 3:16), but different passages are useful for different circumstances. Passages like the fifth and sixth trumpets in this chapter usually will not comfort the bereaved or lonely, but they are useful for shaking us from our complacency. They provide a reality check, denouncing our fantasies that life will always continue as normal and summoning us to recognise the terrible suffering of the world around us.”*

#### **The Big Picture**

##### **1. What is the overall impression these verses give?**

This is comprehensive and almost incomprehensible judgment.

This is war, chaos, natural disaster and terrible conquest all rolled into one.

##### **2. What is the significance of the 'one third'? What positive (?) is there in this?**

The one third reminds us that God is not merely acting willy-nilly. This is carefully delineated. It is the lamb who opens the seals – he is in control.

And of course the positive is that at this 'stage' two-thirds remain.

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *“One third is destroyed, to be sure, but not 3 thirds. Symbolically, the numbers mean 'many but not a majority.’”*

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

### **3. Note 9:20-21. What is the attitude of mankind, in general, to these disasters?**

They continue on regardless. Their rebellion continues – with worship of idols and clinging to their favourite sins.

Keener (NIVAC): *“Finally, the message of repentance (9:20–21) is not only for the world, but for professing Christians who have grown too comfortable with the world’s values (2:5, 16, 21–22; 3:3, 19; cf. 18:4).”*

Beale (Revelation): *“The vices listed here—murders, sorceries, immorality, and thefts—are associated with idol worship in both the OT and the NT (e.g., Jer. 7:5–11 [cited by Jesus in Matt. 21:13]; Hos. 3:1–4:2; 2 Kgs. 9:22; Isa. 47:9–10, 48:5; Mic. 5:12–6:8; Nah. 1:14; 3:1–4; Acts 15:20; Rom. 1:18–32; Gal. 5:20; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5), as in Revelation (see on Rev. 2:14, 20–22 with respect to “immorality” [porneia]; see also 21:8; 22:15). Indeed, idolatry is the root sin responsible for these other vices. The repetition of “repent” in 9:20–21 could be linked with the theme of repentance in the letters, especially 2:21–23, where the word occurs three times as a challenge to repent from idolatry”*

### **The Basics**

#### **1. What disasters are brought upon the earth after each of the first four trumpets?**

Beale (Revelations): *“The first four trumpets: God deprives the ungodly of earthly security because of their persecution and idolatry in order to indicate their separation from him. (8:6–12)”*

First – Hail, Fire Blood – 1/3 burned up.

Second – Mountain thrown into the sea – 1/3 on and in the sea destroyed.

Third – Huge falling star – 1/3 of waters poisoned.

Fourth – Darkened Moon, Sun, Stars – 1/3 of light gone.

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *“The first four trumpets herald natural disasters. The first and second bring a volcanic eruption (8:7-9). With the third and fourth trumpets heavenly bodies are struck.”*

Keener (NIVAC): *“These plagues resemble those in Exodus: God sent hail mixed with fire both in Egypt and in Revelation (Ex. 9:23–24; Rev. 8:7); he turned Egypt’s water supply to blood (Ex. 7:20–21), so God turns much of the world’s water into blood (Rev. 8:8–9) and otherwise makes it undrinkable (8:10–11); he sent the plague of darkness on Egypt of old (Ex. 10:22) and on the world in Revelation (8:12). The righteous, however, are protected (7:1–8), just as Israel was (Ex. 8:22; 9:26); in the end both are preserved by the blood of the paschal Lamb (Ex. 12:13; Rev. 5:5–6).”*

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

Beale (Revelation): *“Undoubtedly, the main OT passage in view here is the story of the fall of Jericho in Joshua 6, where trumpets announced the impending victory of a holy war. Seven trumpets were blown by seven priests, and here the trumpets are blown by seven angels who are priestly figures (see 15:6). The ark was present at Jericho (Josh. 6:11–13) and, in its heavenly form, is also present in the heavenly temple (Rev. 11:19). Interestingly, at the Jericho episode (Josh. 6:10–20), there was verbal silence directly linked to a climactic trumpet judgment, which is a pattern found in Revelation 8.”*

### **2. Why do trumpets 5 and 6 deserve the ‘woe, woe, woe’ of 8:13?**

Beale (Revelation): *“The fifth and sixth trumpets: demons are commissioned to punish hardened unbelievers (8:13–9:21)”*

Now the judgments take on a spiritual and human dimension.

Locusts – terrifying locusts – assault the people.

Those sealed with God’s seal are only to suffer torture.

Then comes the horses ...

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *“The first woe (9:12) for Man is the Satanic torture he experiences. The first four trumpets herald natural disasters; the 5th satanically inspired supernatural disasters.”*

### **3. To whom do you think 9:11 is referring?**

There is some conjecture about this but it seems to me it is either a fallen angel or more specifically Satan himself.

Beale (Revelation): *The “names, together with the statement that the angel is “king over” the demons, suggest that this is either Satan himself or one of his most powerful representatives. Rev. 12:3–4 and 13:1ff. are compatible with this conclusion, since there the devil and the beast are pictured, respectively, with kingly diadems on their heads and as leaders of evil forces.”*

## **Connections**

### **1. Mt. Vesuvius erupted about 20 years before this was written burying Pompeii. What possible allusions can you see to this event in these verses?**

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *“John is describing the first-century Roman Empire. Less than 20 years before John wrote, Mount Vesuvius had erupted and destroyed Pompeii, just as John describes in 8:6-9. It’s not hard to imagine the story of how “something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea” circulated round the empire (v 8). Vesuvius “created a pall of darkness so widespread that men feared the imminent dissolution of the physical order” (Caird, Commentary on the Revelation, page 79).”*

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

And as I was writing these there was the huge eruption in the Canary Islands with accompanying spectacular and frightening television images. Not to mention the reasonably severe earthquake in Victoria just yesterday as I write this.

- 2. Note the references to locusts in Exodus 10 especially v13-17 and Joel 2:1-11. Can you think of any other Old Testament connections in these verses?**

There is much here that is reminiscent of the Plagues of Egypt.

Remember that in that sequence of events. Pagan Egypt is judged and God's people are passed over.

In Joel 2 and 3 again the plague of locusts is a vehicle of God's judgement.

Beale (Revelation): *"To attempt to find the dominant model for the locusts first in the realm of modern warfare (for instance, helicopters, as one popular writer suggests) instead of OT imagery is not the best approach. Rather than first going forward from John's time into our present or future, the commentator should first go back from John's time to the OT, since this is the first clear source from which Revelation derives its images and determines their meaning."*

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *"Revelation chapters 8 and 9 might sound like the end of the world, but in fact they are full of allusions to God's past judgments against great empires. The allusions to the fall of Babylon are particularly significant, as John identifies "Babylon" as Rome (17:5-7, 9). So these chapters describe calamities falling on the Roman Empire. John assembles image after image from the Old Testament. He's not presenting a single, coherent picture. He's saying, in effect, It's a bit like this... and it's also like this ... or think of it like this... John is enabling his readers to interpret the calamities of history. Conquest, conflict and famine were signs of God's judgment in the past, and they are signs of God's judgment now. God brought down previous empires and he can bring down empires in the present—even the Roman Empire."*

### **Impact**

- 1. Tim Chester (Revelation For You): "Do you find it hard to read Revelation chapters 6 – 9 as a description of history? If so, do you agree that this is because our lives are unusually comfortable?"**

For consideration and discussion.

- 2. Given the scope of God's judgement what do we as a church or as individuals need to repent of?**

For consideration and discussion.



## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

Worth repeating: Keener (NIVAC): *“Finally, the message of repentance (9:20–21) is not only for the world, but for professing Christians who have grown too comfortable with the world’s values (2:5, 16, 21–22; 3:3, 19; cf. 18:4).”*

3. ***“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”*** (C.S. Lewis: *The Problem of Pain.*)

For consideration and discussion.

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *“Caird comments: “Modern readers are apt to be shocked at the idea that God should be prepared to kill off large numbers of men in order to provide object lessons for those who survive. John is more realistic about the fact of death. All men must die, and the question mark which death sets over their existence is just as great whether they die late or soon, alone or in company, violently or in their beds. Their ultimate destiny is not determined either by the moment or by the manner of their death, as the untimely death of the martyrs should prove, but by the opening of the heavenly books and by the true and just judgments which proceed from the great white throne (20:11-15). The idea that life on earth is so infinitely precious that the death which robs us of it must be the ultimate tragedy is precisely the idolatry that John is trying here to combat. We have already seen (see 6:10) that John calls the enemies of the church ‘the inhabitants of the earth’, because they have made themselves utterly at home in this transient world order. (The Revelation of St John, page 113)”*

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

# Study 7: Revelation 10 Sweet or Sour?

### **Before You Start**

#### ***How has Revelation affected you so far?***

For discussion and consideration.

#### **Listen Carefully to Revelation 10**

Beale (Revelation): *“Just as there was an interpretative parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seals, so again there is a similar parenthesis between the sixth and seventh trumpets. Here the parenthesis extends from 10:1 to 11:13. Ch. 10 is the introduction to the main content of the parenthesis in 11:1–13.”*

### **The Big Picture**

#### **1. What are we waiting for? But what is happening here?**

We are waiting with bated breath for the sounding of the seventh trumpet. (Trumpet 6 was at 9:13).

But here we are given another vision of how the purposes of God are worked out.

#### **2. This is an interlude like the one in chapter 7. What is it meant to convey to the reader?**

It seems to point to the importance of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet (seal in chapter 7)  
Here is revealed God’s purpose for his people.

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *“2 Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (see also Romans 2:4-5). The pause between the sixth and seventh trumpet—for as long as it lasts, and it will not last forever—creates space for the mission of the church.”*

Keener (NIVAC): *“Between the sixth and seventh seals (6:12; 8:1), Revelation has provided a picture of the state of the saints during the period of the seals (7:1–17); the book provides a similar interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets (9:13; 11:15). [Revelation 12–14 then functions as the heart of the book, sandwiched between the trumpets and bowls of God’s anger.]”*

### **The Basics**

#### **1. What sort of impression does the description of the ‘mighty angel’ give you?**

Size, might, power, strength. An important messenger from God.

Keener (NIVAC): *“The magnitude of such angels helped ancient readers of such accounts, including Revelation, to stand in awe of the God who was infinitely greater than such angels.”*

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

Beale (Revelation): *“Therefore, the angel is the divine Angel of the Lord, as in the OT, who is to be identified with Yahweh or with Christ himself. Enhancing this identification is the observation that Christ is compared to a lion in 5:5, and so is the angel in 10:3.”*

Possibly/Probably not relevant but one of the wonders of the ancient world was the Colossus of Rhodes, a statue of the sun god, Helios which was said to be 32 metres tall. It was destroyed in the mid 200s BC.

### **2. Note v7 and 11. What is the task hinted at here? Who is to do it?**

The task is to prophesy (proclaim God’s message) to the world.

John is told he is to do it – Which I take means all of God’s people on earth.

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *“Prophecy is God’s word, the gospel, directed to men and women living in a cosmos in chaos. And in this John was God’s obedient servant, despite the scroll’s bitterness to his stomach. Here is great challenge for us.”*

### **3. What is the ‘little scroll’? Who holds it? And, what is to be done with it?**

In the vision it is precisely that a ‘little scroll’.

The mighty angel holds it. The contrast between the size of the Angel and the size of the scroll is interesting.

John is told he is to take it and eat it?

Beale (Revelation): *“... a reasonable assumption is that the meaning of the scroll of ch. 10 is generally the same as that of ch. 5. In ch. 5, the scroll was symbolic of God’s plan of judgment and redemption, which has been inaugurated by Christ’s death and resurrection.”*

Keener (NIVAC): *“Scholars diverge widely in their views of the “little scroll” the angel holds (10:2).<sup>5</sup> Some regard it as a prophetic commission (see Ezek. 3:1–4).<sup>6</sup> But because it becomes the content of John’s prophecy (Rev. 10:10–11), it seems more likely that this scroll represents the substance of the book of Revelation (1:11; 22:7–10, 18–19). It is possible that this is the book whose seals are broken in 6:1–8:1, but whose contents constitute the entire message of Revelation—the book opened by the Lamb (5:1–9), which may in some sense include the book of life (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27).”*

## **Connections**

### **1. How is the ‘mighty angel’ described? Note Exodus 19:9; Genesis 9:16; Exodus 13:21-22.**

The description is in v1. And impressive it is.

Note these Old Testament verses and who they are referring to:

**Exodus 19:9**      *The LORD said to Moses, “I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you.” Then Moses told the LORD what the people had said.*

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

**Genesis 9:16** *Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."*

**Exodus 13:21** *By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. <sup>22</sup> Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.*

The rainbow, the cloud, the fiery pillars are all associated with the LORD himself.

### **2. Read Ezekiel 2:9-3:9. How is Ezekiel's meal like John's?**

It is sweet and the response to the message is indeed sour (though this is not said as much in Ezekiel).

### **3. What does the description of the scroll John eats as sweet and sour convey?**

That the contents of the scroll are indeed sweet but the response to it will indeed be sour.

To those who respond it is a sweet thing but the message seems sour to those who will not repent.

Beale (Revelation): *"The effect of "eating" or identifying with the book is that it is sweet because it contains God's own life-giving words (Deut. 8:3; Pss. 19:10; 119:103; Prov. 16:21-24; 24:13-14), in which the prophet will briefly [p. 209] delight. The bitterness comes from the scroll's purpose, which is to announce judgment and its effect in terms of the rebellious response of the people. Ezekiel was warned in advance that, except for a remnant who will respond and repent (9:4-6; 14:21-23), those who would listen were a rebellious people and would not respond."*

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *"There's nothing to stop Christ returning today. But "in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet" (v 7—that is, before the final judgment—the gospel is proclaimed to the nations. ... This message is reiterated in verses 8-10, where John is told to eat the scroll, just like Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:9 – 3:9). Like the prophets of old, the church proclaims sweet words that are met with bitter hostility (see also Matthew 5:11-12, to which Revelation 11:18 alludes)."*

### **4. Any thoughts as to why the message of the seven thunders is sealed up?**

John, in v,3-4, hears the seven thunders speak but is prevented from writing them down.

Really your guess is as good as mine. But quite obviously it is something of God's plan that we don't need to know. Remember **Deuteronomy 29:29**

*The **secret things** belong to the LORD our God, but the **things** revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.*

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

Note also 2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 19:12; Daniel 12:9)

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *“Presumably the seven thunders would have affected half of the earth. But the escalation of calamities in history will still not bring repentance. So the thunders are withdrawn. Instead God reveals his secret weapon...”*

Keener (NIVAC): *“The completion of “the mystery” (10:7) probably indicates that the seven thunders will no longer remain secret (10:4); all will be revealed at the consummation (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8–12).”*

Bewes (Lamb Wins): *“So only John was to be entrusted with the secrets of the seven thunders. Here is a firm discouragement for those would be ‘prophets’ who imagine that they have the full run-down of world events at their fingertips. They have not! There is a whole area of knowledge that is kept from us.”*

Note (not quite on topic): Keener (NIVAC): *“The promise of “no more delay” (10:6) reminds us that though we must wait now, delay will not last forever. A time is coming when God will fulfill all his promises made throughout history (Acts 3:21). As an earlier A. M. E. Zion minister, Joseph Charles Price, put it, “No matter how dark the night, I believe in the coming of the dawn.””*

### **Impact**

#### **1. In what ways have you experienced the gospel as both ‘sweet’ and sour’?**

For consideration and discussion

Keener (NIVAC): *“We should follow John’s example, obeying even when the message we are called to proclaim proves bitter or does not make sense to us. Some circles, especially those that emphasise prosperity, condition audiences to expect only pleasant things from God; but his message is not always pleasant, though he always provides the obedient grace to endure it (cf. Jer. 39:18; 45:5).”*

#### **2. Tim Chester (Revelation For You):” John’s “message to Christians is not that we should endure, if by that we mean avoiding trouble by keeping our heads down. His message is to proclaim the gospel to nations, to peoples, to kings.”**

Discuss.

Keener (NIVAC): *“The awesomeness of the angel obedient to God implies that God rules all human and supernatural forces. Whatever crises we as individuals or God’s people as a whole must confront, we can take courage in the Bible’s continual reminders that God has everything under control.”*

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

### Study 8: Revelation 11:1-15 **Two Witnesses**

#### **Before You Start**

*How is the witness of the church going in our world today?*

For consideration and discussion.

#### **Listen Carefully to Revelation 11:1-15**

Beale (Revelation): *“God’s decree ensures his presence with his people and their effective witness, which leads to their apparent defeat and culminates in judgment of their oppressors. (11:1–13)”*

#### **The Big Picture**

**1. What are we still waiting for?**

The seventh trumpet!

**2. What is the broad message about witness in this chapter?**

That it is difficult and is ‘protected’ by God, and it can be deadly but, in the end, it is vindicated by God.

#### **The Basics**

**1. What is John told to do at the opening of the chapter?**

Measure the temple – but not the outer court.

Keener (NIVAC): *“In early Christian literature, however, the temple regularly symbolises Christians, both Jewish and Gentile (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:18–22; 1 Peter 2:5). This is also what the temple symbolises elsewhere in Revelation. (Rev. 3:12; 13:6)”*

And *“The most likely symbolic interpretation of the act of measuring here is a promise of preservation, as in the measuring of Jerusalem (Ps. 48:12–13; Zech. 2:1–2) or the temple (Ezek. 40–42, esp. 40:3). ... however, no measurements are given here; this defers the mention of the measuring rod until 21:16, when John begins to measure the gloriously massive new Jerusalem, which is shaped like the Most Holy Place. The small, persecuted remnant oppressed during this age constitutes the glorious Holy City of the age to come (cf. Mark 4:31–32).”*

**2. How are the two witnesses described? What is their story as told in these verses? Who do you think they are?**

They are described as two olive trees and two lampstands (note Revelation 1:12-13,20).

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *“The job description Jesus himself gave to his followers before his ascension was to be his “witnesses” (Acts 1:8).”*

Their story is they have power to prophesy like Moses and like Elijah and they are supernaturally protected (they really do have superpowers).

In due time, however, they beast kills (or is allowed to kill) them and they are displayed and then resurrected.

Note the power of what happens in v12.

Bewes (Lamb Wins): *“Who are the two witnesses? They are the church, God's people across the ages. They are the Christians of East Timor. They are the Christians of the Sudan. They are the Christians of imperial Rome. They are you and me.”*

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *“Two prophets are killed in the streets of the city where they are prophesying. Clearly it is dangerous and painful to be a prophet.”*

Beale (Revelation): *“But why two witnesses? The OT required two witnesses to establish an offence against the law (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15). Jesus also used the same principle (Matt. 18:16; Luke 10:1–24, where there are thirty-five—or thirty-six in some manuscripts—groups of two witnesses; John 8:17). So also did Paul (2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19). God sent two angels to testify to the truth of the resurrection (Luke 24:4) and to the fact that Jesus would return (Acts 1:10–11). Above all, only two of the seven churches in chs. 2–3 escaped Christ's accusations of unfaithfulness (Smyrna and Philadelphia). That these two churches as representative of the faithful church are in mind is apparent from the identification of the “prophetic witnesses” here as “lampstands.” Thus there is pictured here the faithful remnant church who witnesses.”*

### **3. Verses 14 and 15 speak of two different things to come. What are they?**

Beale (Revelation): *“The literary and theological parenthesis of 10:1–11:13 has ended. Therefore, v. 14 begins where 9:21 ended: **The second woe is past** (9:13–21); **behold, the third woe is coming quickly**. As in 9:12, the chronological language does not concern the order of history represented in the three woe visions, but refers only to the order of visions (see further on 9:12; 4:1).”*

The kingdom of God is to come.

The Messiah's eternal reign.

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *“This statement is equivalent to that made earlier, namely that the Lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered. As we saw this referred to the sacrificial and redemptive death of the Lamb (5:5-6). The conquest of the Lamb, and the now arrived Kingdom of God are present realities based on past events. This is the witness that cost the two prophets their lives, the bitter/sweet message which John shrinks from declaring, but which the world in its pain needs to hear and believe. It is not the message of a still to come, last battle. Rather it is the message of the Lamb that was slain to liberate men and women from their sins and from the power of evil. It tells what battle was fought and of a victory won.”*

On ‘will reign for ever and ever see Exod 15:18; Ps 10:16; Pss 145:13; 146:10; Lam 5:19; Ezek 43:7; Dan 4:3, 34; 6:26; Mic 4:7. The metaphor “forever” is also used of the reign of the house of David (2 Sam 7:13–16; 22:51; 1 Kgs 2:45; 1 Chr 22:10; 28:4; 2 Chr 6:16; 7:18; 13:5; Pss 45:6; 61:7; 89:3–4, 35–37; Isa 9:7; Jer 33:17; Ezek 37:25; and by extension it refers to the Messiah (Luke 1:33; Heb 1:8). (Aune (WBC)

### **Connections**

#### **1. In what city are the two witnesses’ bodies displayed? Why is this significant**

It is *“in the public square of the great city —which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified.”*

Sodom and Egypt are symbols of sinfulness and of oppression and in the first two books of the Bible; both suffer God’s wrath because they have rejected him and his words of warning.

Jerusalem is of course the city that rejected and crucified Jesus so they too fall under judgment. Noting of course that Jews (the 12 tribes are mentioned) and people of every nation, tribe and tongue are to be found in worship before the throne of God (7:4-9)

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *“Jesus’ death and resurrection spelled the end of the great earthly shrine in Jerusalem. No longer would there be a holy place on earth for God’s people together. Believers now gather by faith in the temple in heaven, in the presence of the enthroned one and the lamb who was slain for their sins.”*

Barnett (Apocalypse Now and Then): *“By its killing of Jesus Jerusalem has proved to be just as pagan and hostile to God’s people as Sodom and Egypt had been.”*



## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

- 2. What is the contrast between 11:13 and 9:20-21? What makes the difference?**

In 11:13 the survivors of the ‘inhabitants of the earth’, the ones who refused to repent at the end of chapter 9, finally give glory to God.

But is it too late?

- 3. When the seventh trumpet sounds (v15) what is the response?**

Worship in heaven.

The Kingdom has come

Bewes (Lamb Wins): *“In this way the seven trumpets conclude with the angelic acclamation of the reign of Christ. True, he is Lord already; but we have yet to see the final act. The Master of the World has yet to take over conclusively from the dictators, the business consortiums, the generals and the power manipulators.”*

Keener (NIVAC): *“The closing verses of chapter 11 address the seventh trumpet. Although the final trumpet concludes the series of seven (11:15), it also fits the occasion here; trumpets were normally blown at the accession of a king to his throne (1 Kings 1:34–41; 2 Kings 9:13; 11:14). The Bible had promised that the Davidic Messiah would “reign forever” (Rev. 11:15; cf. Isa. 9:7; 1 Macc. 2:57); naturally Jewish people recognised that God would reign forever (Ps. 10:16; 146:10; 1 En. 84:2). Daniel had [Rev., p. 305] emphasised the final triumph of God’s kingdom over the successive world empires (Dan. 2:44; cf. 7:17–18), a hope celebrated by many of John’s contemporaries.”*

### **Impact**

- 1. Tim Chester (Revelation For You) “So the question we should ask ourselves is: Where do we see the two witnesses today? Where do we see God’s people faithfully witnessing in the face of hostility?” Discuss**

Again, Bewes (Lamb Wins): *“Who are the two witnesses? They are the church, God’s people across the ages. They are the Christians of East Timor. They are the Christians of the Sudan. They are the Christians of imperial Rome. They are you and me.”*

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *“What is God’s “secret weapon” in the face of the hostile powers of this world? It is the faithful people of God sustained by the powerful Spirit of God. Again and again throughout history, regimes have risen and it’s looked as if they would wipe out the church. But those regimes have gone, and the church has come through persecution stronger. It has been victorious through suffering. Life has come through death.”*

## **7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

Keener (NIVAC): *“Only when the church becomes prepared to challenge the idols of society with the claims of Christ, as the two witnesses do in our text, will we witness God’s power in biblical fullness.”*

2. **Tim Chester (Revelation For You):** *“Revelation 5:9-10 is key not just to these chapters but to John’s whole vision:*

*“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals,*

*because you were slain,*

*and with your blood you purchased for God*

*persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.*

*You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”*

### **Discuss.**

This is an opportunity to think through what the whole, big picture, message of Revelation is.

It is worth of note that the passages we have studied over the last 8 weeks began with a focus in chapter 4 on the One who sits on the throne at the centre of heaven and now have concluded with

*“The kingdom of the world has become*

*the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah,*

*and he will reign for ever and ever.”*

The principal focus of Revelation is that our God rules.

Tim Chester (Revelation For You): *“John’s readers must have wondered if Christ was truly sovereign. They knew the stories of Nero’s cruel persecutions in AD 64. They had witnessed Parthian invasion, civil war in 69 (“the year of the four emperors”), the destruction of Jerusalem in 70, the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 and the famines of 92. They knew the daily tension of a thousand choices to speak or keep quiet, to take a stand or participate in paganism. Revelation chapters 6 – 11 show that Christ rules over these sufferings. More than that, our sufferings are part of his plan to bring history under his rule.”*

**7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders****The Main Theological Messages of Revelation***From Beale – Revelation: A Shorter Commentary*

We would suggest that the following themes in Revelation express the heart of God in giving this series of visions to John:

***Willingness to Suffer for Christ Is the Path to Ultimate Victory.*** Even as the cross turned out to seal Christ's victory over Satan, so the present suffering of Christians seals their victory over the powers of darkness. Even while, like Christ, Christians suffering tribulation and hardship (1:9) also share in Christ's kingly reign (1:6). In this present age, believers may suffer physical hardship, but their spirits will be kept safe (11:1–12). The church's persecutors, on the other hand, will find themselves in the same position as Satan. Even as Satan's apparent victory triggered his ultimate defeat, so the present evil actions of unbelievers (11:10) are only laying the basis for their final judgment (11:13, 18). One of the main goals of the book, therefore, is to exhort believers to remain faithful to Christ in spite of present sufferings and in spite of the temptation to engage in idolatry represented by compromise with the world-system, because this faithfulness will eventually be rewarded in the heavenly kingdom. Notice that after the portrayal of the heavenly kingdom in 21:1–22:5, the final words of the book revert to the command to remain faithful. The heavenly visions serve as motivators for Christians now suffering in adversity to hold to the glorious promises of God and not to fall away. And so in the same way, Christians today should still read Revelation and allow its portrayal of the divine majesty to motivate us to continued faithfulness. Christians are to live according [p. 33] to the values of this new world, not those of the world in which they live. Churches should be reminded that the scenes of heavenly worship are to be the model for our earthly worship every Lord's Day—for remember, it was as John readied himself for worship on the Lord's Day that he was given this vision.

***The Sovereignty of God in Human History.*** In chs. 4 and 5 John is given a vision of the throne room of God. The word "throne" appears seventeen times in these two chapters (out of thirty-four times in the book as a whole), and signifies the sovereignty of God. In the vision, the Lamb is given a place of equal honor to God himself, and so the chapters as a whole portray the victory of God and the Lamb. Because this vision serves as the introduction to all the subsequent visions in the book, its significance is to demonstrate the authority of God and of Christ over all that is about to unfold in the remainder of the book. The trials of the believers, the apparent triumph of the forces of the enemy, the eventual destruction of the latter, and the victory of the church are all under the sovereign control of God. It is therefore true to say

**7s: Spirits, Lamps, Seals, Angels, Trumpets, Thunders**

that, according to Revelation, the hand of God is directly behind the tribulations of believers as well as those of unbelievers. Such trials are sent by God to refine his people. Not only that, but the OT passages which influence the visions of the seals, trumpets, and bowls also picture God as the cause of the woes which befall believers and unbelievers alike (see Zech. 6:1–8; Ezek. 14:21; Lev. 26:14–33 and their use in the seals in Rev. 6:2–8, or the sending of the Exodus plagues as formative for the trumpet and bowl plagues). The mystery as to how God would allow believers also to suffer is answered throughout the book: God’s strategy is to use the woes to refine their faith, while reserving unbelievers for ultimate punishment. As the heavenly vision leads into the picture in ch. 6 of the horsemen and the initial unleashing of the divine judgments, it is clear that the resurrected Lamb (6:1) is in control of what is happening. The cross has been transformed from tragedy into triumph, and so also will God transform the earthly woes of believers into heavenly and eternal victory. The people of God have no other destiny during the church age than that of the Lamb during his earthly ministry. This is why Rev. 14:4 says that they “follow the Lamb wherever he goes.”

***The New Creation as Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy.*** The main prophetic themes of both OT and NT culminate in the new covenant, the new temple, the new Israel, and the new Jerusalem, all of which are summed up in [p. 34] the concept of the new creation. These themes appear in 21:1–22:5 at the climax of the book. In both Revelation and other parts of the NT, these realities are seen to have already *begun* to be fulfilled in Christ—believers as the new creation, the church as the new Israel, and so on. These prophetic realities are then *consummately* fulfilled, especially as envisioned in 21:1–22:5.