

# **An Isagogical Treatment of the Revelation of St. John the Divine**

*By Siegbert W. Becker*

## **Introduction**

The Revelation of St. John the Theologian is the one book of the New Testament which Eusebius classified both as a homologoumenon and as one of the spurious books of the New Testament. That is a rather strange combination, since today Revelation is called an antilegomenon. It would seem that the church of the second century displayed no hesitation in treating this book as canonical. But when the millennialistic Montanists used the book to support their chiliasm, many of the church fathers, including Eusebius, began to have doubts about the canonicity of the book.

This doubt was expressed also by Dr. Martin Luther. In his first preface to the Apocalypse (1522), he rather vehemently rejected its apostolic character when he wrote, "My spirit cannot accommodate itself to this book." His chief arguments against the book are, first, that it is written in an unclear way whereas an apostle ought to write clearly; secondly, the author praises his own work too highly; and, thirdly, Christ is neither known nor taught in it. However, the last edition of the German Bible, printed in the year of Luther's death, shows that he had modified his position rather significantly. The severest strictures against Revelation have disappeared from the preface completely, and Luther, after citing the doubts of some of the fathers about the Johanine authorship, writes "For our part, we still share this doubt. By that, however, no one should be prevented from regarding this as the work of John the apostle."

Lutherans have often taken their cue from Luther's early preface and treated this last book of the New Testament with disdain. But surely, even if the book is filled with exegetical conundrums and even if there is much in the book that we do not understand, yet it is still true that some of the most beautiful passages of the New Testament are found in this book. It is surely not difficult to see why Luther in his later years no longer said that Christ is neither known nor taught in this book. Where will you find a more beautiful doxology in praise of the Savior than that found in the first chapter. "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." Where is the evangelical Christian who does not with a thrilled heart join in the song sung to the Lamb, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain and has redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth." And who among us does not long for the day when we shall stand before the throne and before the Lamb with that great host arrayed in white like thousand snow-clad mountains bright, of whom it is said, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his Temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

## **The Authorship of Revelation**

Luther, taking his cue from Eusebius, whom he specifically cites in this connection, expressed his doubts about the Johanine authorship, as we have already seen. But it is rather obvious that Eusebius misread his sources. As evidence for his position that the apostle John did not write the book he quotes from the writings of Papias. He says that Papias speaks of two men called John, one of whom he mentions "with Peter and James and Matthew, and the other apostles" and another John who is not included in the number of the apostles and is distinguished "plainly by the name of presbyter." What Eusebius seems to have overlooked is that Papias in this

context does not call Peter and James and Matthew “apostles” but “elders,” or “presbyters,” and that therefore John is not distinguished from them by the title “presbyter.” Moreover, there is a clear explanation in the text itself for the double mention of John. The point is lost in the English translation of Eusebius with which most of us are familiar. There Papias is quoted as saying (HE III, 39): “If I met with any one who had been a follower of the elders anywhere, I made it a point to inquire what were the declarations of the elders. What was said by Andrew, Peter or Philip. What by Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or any other of the disciples of our Lord. What was said by Aristion, and the presbyter John, disciples of the Lord.” According to the original, however, the last sentence should read, “What *is being said* by Aristion, and the presbyter John,” for there the Greek verb is in the present tense, and the double mention of John is explained by the fact that the apostle John was still living at the time of which Papias is speaking. It might be pointed out also that in Second and Third John the apostle gives himself the title “elder” or “presbyter.”

Eusebius also quotes Dionysius of Alexandria as another of the early fathers who had his doubts about the Johannine authorship. Dionysius gives several reasons for his doubt. He says that although John names himself several times as the author of Revelation, the apostle John does not do this in his Gospel or in his three epistles. He mentions also that there were two monuments to John in Ephesus, and that the second John was very likely the author of Revelation. He cites also many similarities between the Gospel and the First Epistle of John and says that the Apocalypse has “not even a syllable in common with them” (HE VII 2 25). His last reason for rejecting the authorship of John he finds in the poor Greek style of the Revelation.

I can see no reason for doubting the apostolic origin of this book. The author calls himself John in both the first and last chapter of the book and the authority that he claims for his writing in the closing verses would ill befit anyone who does not speak at the commission of Christ. Moreover, in this book we have one of the strongest claims to inspiration found in the New Testament. He hears and writes the words and the revelation of Jesus Christ. When he calls himself the “servant” or “slave” of Jesus Christ, he speaks of himself in the same terms used by the Paul (Rm 1:1) and Peter (2 Pt 1:1), James (1:1) and Jude to describe themselves. And, contrary to the opinion expressed by Dionysius of Alexandria, there are many points of similarity between Revelation, on the one hand, and the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle of John, on the other. We will mention only one. Beside the first chapter of John’s Gospel and his First Epistle, the nineteenth chapter of Revelation is the only place in the New Testament where the second person of the Trinity is called the Word of God. The author is either the apostle John or someone who is trying very hard to give the impression that he speaks with apostolic authority, and the only real choice open to us is either to reject it outright or else to accept it as part of the canon. This much already appears to be clear in the strange classification of this book in the history of Eusebius.

It is true that the Greek style in which the Revelation is written is significantly different from that found in the other writings of John. There may be several explanations for the difference. First of all, we know that the apostles as well as the prophets often used secretaries in reducing their preaching to writing, and there is nothing in the doctrine of verbal inspiration that would keep the Holy Ghost from using suggestions as to wording and style from these secretaries who were sometimes allowed to add remarks of their own (cp. e.g. Rm 16:22). It seems rather clear that John had such help in writing his Gospel, for otherwise it is difficult to explain the plural pronoun in the second last verse of that book. But on Patmos, where the visions of the Apocalypse were seen

and written down, John had no such help. It seems very clear also that some of the solecisms found in the book are deliberate and significant. There is no question that John knows that the Greek preposition *ἀπό* takes the genitive case. He uses it with the genitive in the same sentence in which he writes, *ἀπό τοῦ ὄντος καὶ τοῦ ἦν καὶ ἡ ἐρχόμενος*. It seems rather obvious that the phrase is used as an indeclinable proper name for the immutable God, who had called Himself Jahweh, “I AM THAT I AM”, in the Old Testament. A third reason for the difference in style is to be found in the radically different type of material treated in the book. Because of this I would hesitate to deny the apostolic authorship on the basis of the “poor Greek.” Those of us who still use German, perhaps have little difficulty with the language when we use it to present the teachings of Scripture;

but I am sure that many of us, when we have a modern day illustration in our English sermon, have a rather difficult time rendering that illustration in a German version, and the difficulty experienced in groping for the proper German words carries over often into the German grammar. For those of us who have had such experiences the language of Revelation ought to present no special problem.

### **The Interpretation of Revelation**

The Apocalypse has given its name to a type or form of literature that is found both in the Old Testament and in the extra-canonical literature of late Old Testament and early New Testament times. Especially Daniel and Ezekiel contain much so-called apocalyptic writing. In a very rough way apocalyptic literature may be defined as an effort to portray the future by means of strange and often fantastic symbolism. Modern scholars usually make a point of this that the authors of apocalyptic works write pseudonymously in the name of great figures of the past and describe the happenings of their own time in terms intended to hide their meaning from those who are not initiated into their secret. On the basis of such a definition the book of Daniel, for example, is dated in the age of Antiochus Epiphanes. Such false views are so wedded to the term “apocalyptic” in the historical-critical method and its literature that we perhaps ought to hesitate to describe the last book of the New Testament in such terms without further explanation.

One hermeneutical view of the book based on such modern denigrations of apocalyptic literature. It is the so-called preterist view, which holds that the events portrayed in the book in symbolic terms are all events that had already happened when the book was written or were clearly foreseeable at the time of writing. This view must be rejected out of hand by anyone who takes the book at face value and considers it to be the inspired Word of God in the normal meaning of that term.

A second view that must also be rejected is the futurist interpretation which holds that the events described here still lie in the future and will be fulfilled in the last period of the world’s history, in the seven years of the great tribulation, the rapture, and the millennial reign of Christ. The refutation of that view shall not detain us here, even though it is one of the tragedies of modern conservative Protestantism and even though our people are being exposed to such views more and more and have their morbid curiosity about the future tickled by them.

A Bible-believing Lutheran, who together with the Augsburg Confession rejects the “Jewish Opinions” read into Revelation by fundamentalistic Protestants, is left with a choice between two views concerning the interpretation of Revelation. Probably the most popular view in earlier times was what might be called the church-historical interpretation of the book. This was the view held by Martin Luther and other Lutheran commentators until recent times. This method of interpretation may be illustrated by pointing out that Luther says that in the vision of the seven trumpets which begins in chapter seven the first angel is Tatian, the second, Marcion, the third, Origen, the fourth, Novatian, the fifth Arius, and the sixth, Mohammad. We are all familiar with a slightly later interpretation that said that the angel flying “in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach” (Rv 14:6) was a clear prediction concerning Luther and the Lutheran Reformation, for we use that passage as the epistle pericope for Reformation Day.

The proponents of this method of interpreting Revelation which seeks a specific personage or event in each symbolic detail in the book generally have their heart in the right place and understand the basic message of the book very well. Luther, for example, comments that the vision of the seven trumpets assures us that “even under heretics, Christendom will have good angels and the pure Word,” a remark which is very much in place.

Nevertheless, this method of reading the book has perhaps contributed a great deal to the hesitation with which the book is often approached. Many things that are said by Lutheran commentators who use this method must be labeled as pure guesswork that always leaves the hearer in doubt unless he is willing to accept human opinion as authoritative. Luther may be right when he says that the third angel is Origen, and I am sometimes inclined to believe that he is very close to being right when he says that the sixth angel is Mohamed, but no

matter how hard I try, I cannot become certain about such a specific interpretation. We are always inclined to ask such commentators, “How do you know that?” Moreover, what is to prevent a commentator from saying that the angel flying in the midst of heaven having the everlasting Gospel to preach is Oscar Naumann?

Luther himself gives us the clue to the proper reading of the book in the comments already alluded to. At the conclusion of his remarks on the vision of the seven trumpets he writes, “The scholars who know history will be able to figure this out, for it would take too long to relate and prove everything here.” Yet it is also clear that Luther himself did not hold strongly to a church-historical interpretation. That is evident when he says, “The second (angel) is Marcion, with his Cataphrygians, Manichaeans, Montanists, etc., who extol their own spirituality above all the Scriptures, and who move like the burning mountain, between heaven and earth, as, for example, Muenzer, and the fanatics in our day.” Luther, thus, is not nearly as specific as may appear at first glance. He realizes that the symbols are drawn in broad outline and have their application in every age and to varied circumstances.

In this way Luther foreshadows what may be called, for want of a better name, the idealistic interpretation. In this view the red horses of chapter six is not a symbol for any specific war, but for every war that has brought great tribulation to men; the black horse symbolizes not any specific famine in the end times but every famine that has raised the price of food out of reach. The smoke from the bottomless pit which obscures the sun in chapter 8 is not one specific heresy, but every false doctrine that obscures the light of the Gospel. In this interpretation the flying angel with the everlasting Gospel to preach is not specifically Martin Luther and the Lutheran Reformation but every movement in the church carrying the clear Gospel to the ends of the earth. That does not mean that the symbols may not fit some of these movements better than others. The idealistic interpretation does not prevent us from using Rev. 14:6 as a Reformation text, but it refuses to limit the interpretation to one specific time and one specific event. I would not hesitate to suggest that the angel is flying more or less vigorously in the Wisconsin Synod today and that Semtex, too, is a part of Babylon, and Luther was very likely not far from the truth when he said that the sixth angel with his hordes of horseman from the east is a symbol for the armies of Mohammedanism.

The idealistic interpretation enables us to read the book of Revelation as a clear book. The broad outlines of this book and its basic teachings are generally very clear, but just as we create difficulties for ourselves when we try to interpret every detail of a parable and in so doing often make the interpretation uncertain and the parable unclear, so we must guard against interpreting the Apocalypse in every detail. Symbolic and figurative language must never be pressed beyond the point of comparison. That does not mean that the symbols are arbitrary and can be interpreted any way at all. There is a reason why the Savior is described as a lamb and the devil is pictured as a great red dragon, and those who remember that the Savior told His disciples to let their light shine will know why the seven golden candlesticks are used as symbols for the seven churches.

We will have learned how to deal with this book when we have learned to read the Apocalypse the way we read the parables. And when we have familiarized ourselves, not only with those sections of the Old Testament which are commonly classified as “apocalyptic” but with the rich symbolism which is so prevalent in the Old Testament and by no means missing in the New, we will find this prophetic book not nearly so formidable as it appears to be at first glance.

What we have in the seven distinct sections of Revelation are seven grand wall tapestries depicting in broad outline the whole history of the church in this present evil world during the whole period of the New Testament. In each of the seven portraits we see the everlasting Gospel being preached in the midst of great tribulation. And over and over again we see the church victorious in spite of all the trials that she must suffer at the hands of ecclesiastical and political anti-Christian forces that seek to silence the witness of the messengers of God. The whole message of the book may be summed up in the words of the apostles, “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God,” and enter it we shall by the grace of God and the blood of the Lamb.

This idealistic interpretation is really only a variation of the church-historical interpretation of Revelation. The use of such terminology may suggest that we use a different method of interpreting Revelation from the one we use in reading most of the rest of Scripture. Our opponents in modern Lutheranism may well ask us why we object so strongly to *Formgeschichte* when we recognize so clearly that Revelation must be read as a different type of literature from that found in the gospels or in the epistles. We can only answer that there are elements of truth in *Formgeschichte*, just as there were many elements of truth in the words of Satan spoken in the garden of Eden.

There are different forms of literature in the Bible but what type of literature we are dealing with must be determined by the text itself and not by the whims of historical-critical methodology. That determination must rather be made by the grammatical-historical method. We know from the words of the text itself that the stars in Revelation, chapter one, are not luminous objects in the sky because we are told that the seven stars are the seven angels of the seven churches. We may not be able to decide beyond the shadow of a doubt whether these angels are guardian angels assigned to the churches, for such a notion is not altogether out of harmony with the teaching of Scripture although there would be little to substantiate it, or whether these angels of the seven churches are the pastors of those congregations, an idea which has not only the literal meaning of the Greek word to commend it but would fit much more neatly into the whole of Christian doctrine, or, as we might call it, the analogy of faith.

Another variation of the same argument is employed by those who ask us why we will not permit them to read Genesis the way we ourselves read Revelation. Why is it not possible for them to read Genesis as “*Rueckschauende Prophetie*,” if we insist on reading Revelation as what I suppose they would call “*Vorwaertschauende Prophetie*.” One can only wonder whether such questions are honest and honorable or whether they are intended to sow confusion among the simple.

The fact of the matter is that we read Genesis and Revelation in exactly the same way. When John says that he was on the island of Patmos we read that as a historical statement just as we read the account of creation and the fall. When Genesis 15 tells us that Abraham had a vision, we read that exactly the same way we read the words of John when he tells us of the visions he saw on Patmos. And when we read the description of the vision in Genesis 15 we read that part of the chapter in exactly the same way we read John’s account of his vision. The only difference is that the vision of John was considerably longer than that of Abraham. It might also be remarked in passing that the vision of Abraham contains figures which are in a sense just as fantastic as some of those we find in the vision of John. Moreover, it might also be said that the lesson taught by both visions is the same. Abraham’s vision, too, clearly signifies that the descendants would through much tribulation enter the kingdom by the grace of God, who will have His way and keep His covenant in spite of all opposition.

The idealistic or church-historical interpretation is really the grammatical-historical method of interpretation applied to this particular form of literature. And it ought to be stressed again and again that the words of the text itself tell us that we are dealing with symbols that stand for something else.

Sometimes we are told exactly what the symbols mean, as in the case of the seven candlesticks and the seven stars.

Sometimes the immediate context makes the symbol clear. No one needs to tell us that the majestic figure with the two-edged sword coming out of his mouth is the Lord Jesus. In fact, after reading the first chapter I suppose that most of us are unaware of the fact that the Savior has not once in the vision been identified by name.

Sometimes the whole context of Revelation makes the symbolism clear. After we have read in chapter twelve that the great dragon has been overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of the testimony of God’s people, it is surely clear that the chain that binds Satan in chapter twenty is the preaching of the everlasting Gospel.

Sometimes other books of the Bible leave no doubt about the meaning of the symbol. Why the sword comes out of the mouth of the Savior instead of being held in His hand, as we might expect, is no longer a

mystery to anyone who has read in the book of Hebrews that the Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. The significance of the Savior standing in the midst of the seven candlesticks is not unclear to anyone who knows that He promised, "Lo, I am with you always," and "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them."

The idealistic interpretation is also the literal interpretation. We Lutherans are often accused of not reading Revelation literally enough because we will not let the thousand years of chapter twenty be a thousand literal years. And yet those who accuse us of this read the book much less literally than we do. A literal interpretation is one which allows the letters and the words as they are used in context determine the meaning of the text. Just a few moments of reflection ought to make clear how unliteral those people are who accuse us of ignoring the literal meaning of the text. Anyone who says, for example, that the seven letters to the seven churches are not real letters but representations of the seven ages of church history, ought not to accuse us of failure to use a literal interpretation. And the same thing can be said of anyone who can read the universal conversion of the Jews into the words directed to the congregation in Philadelphia, "Behold, I will make them of the synogog of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." Anyone who sees in those words the conversion of even one Jew has already forsaken the literal meaning of the text.

How totally foreign to the literal meaning of the text-it is to say that Christ, according to Revelation twenty, will reign on this earth with His resurrected believers for exactly a thousand years should be clear to anyone who pays close attention to the exact words and letters of that chapter. John says that the *souls* of the believers live and reign with Christ for a thousand years. Everyone who has paid attention when John said in chapter one that the Savior has made us kings knows that our souls began to reign with Christ on the day of our conversion. This is also the first resurrection, as anyone will know who has read literally what the Savior had to say about a double resurrection in John 5:28,29, where He speaks of one resurrection that takes place in time when dead men hear the voice of the Son of God, and a second resurrection that takes place at the end of time, when the bodies of believers and unbelievers shall come out of the graves where they lie buried. And what the thousand years must be is also clear from the text. It is the period during which our souls live and reign with Christ. For the individual believer it is the period during which our *souls* live and reign with Christ. For the individual believer it is the period between his conversion and the day when his body, too, is raised to share in the freedom that his soul has known during all that time. For the church as a whole it is the whole period from the conversion of the first member of the New Testament church until that day when all believers will receive their glorified bodies from Him who shall change our vile bodies that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

How utterly ridiculous the charge of Millennialists against us is when they say that we do not read the Apocalypse literally enough as demonstrated also by the fact that they find the rapture in the first verse of chapter four. John there tells us that a door was opened in heaven and he heard a voice that said to him, "Come up, hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter." Anyone who has read the preceding context knows that this is something that happened to the apostle John on a Sunday on the island of Patmos and not something that will happen to all believers seven years before the beginning of the millennium. Yet I once heard a millennialist say that this must be the rapture, because if it is not the rapture, then the rapture is not mentioned in Revelation which is impossible to imagine.

I know that we are often accustomed to saying that we must not read Revelation literally. I believe that this is a bad habit we have gotten into which makes it a little difficult for us to answer the charge brought against us by the chileasts. We read Revelation just as literally as we read Genesis, chapter fifteen, and much more-literally than Millennialistic misinterpreters of this book. The literal truth is that Revelation is a vision, and it is literally true that John saw the things he described here, and that the things he saw were symbols under which the future history of the church was pictured. This is the literal meaning of the plain words of the text.

What we do not do is read the book literalistically. The very fact that the Savior is in one verse (5:5) called the Lion of the tribe of Judah and in the very next verse is described as a Lamb having seven horns and

seven eyes ought to make clear to us that we are to be just as free in our interpretation of the symbols as the writer is in the use of them. One of the beauties of figurative language is that a man can be a snake in the grass and a wolf in sheep's clothing at the same time. So the devil can be a great red dragon in one verse, an old serpent in another verse, and the angel of the bottomless pit in still another place, without doing violence to the proper use of figurative language. So also it is distinctly possible that in symbolic description the time of the New Testament could be a thousand years in one passage and 42 months in another place. A wooden, literalistic interpretation of symbolism is an offense against literal interpretation. Some months ago Garner Ted Armstrong pontificated for all the world to hear that the rider on the white horse in chapter six and the rider on the white horse in chapter nineteen could not be the same person because the rider in chapter six wears only one crown and the rider in chapter nineteen wears many crowns. Entirely aside from the fact that in chapter six the rider rides forth to conquer and long before chapter nineteen we are told that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, (11:15), it must still be said that this is the kind of wooden, literalistic interpretation which displays ignorance of the fundamental nature of human language. It would be just as sensible to say that the rider on the white horse in chapter six cannot be the Lord Jesus because in chapter five He is called a Lamb and a lion and lambs don't ride on horses and horses are afraid of lions.

So much by way of introduction. If I understand Wisconsin Synod terminology correctly, this is not what the program committee had in mind when it assigned the topic "An Isagogical Treatment of Revelation." I had intended to give you a survey of the contents, but by the time I had said what I felt ought to be said by way of introduction the paper was already so long that I was sure that an adequate treatment of the contents of the book was impossible in the time allotted for this paper, and I therefore decided to discuss the interpretation of the book in a little more detail.



## Introduction Rev 1:1-20

I The Seven Letters	II The Seven Seals	III The Seven Trumpets	IV The Seven Visions	V The Seven Vials	VI Christ and Antichrist	VII Christ and Satan
Ephesus 2:1-7	1st Seal: The White horse 6:1.2.	1st Trumpet: Hail and fire 8:7	1st Vision: The woman clothed with the sun 12:1-17	1st Vial: Sore (ulcer) 16:1.2	The Power (17:1-18) and Destruction (18:1-24) and Antichrist and the Final Victory of Christ (19:1-21) (The Destruction of Satan's earthly agents)	The Victory over Satan, the Last Judgment, and the Triumph of Christ and His Church 20:1-22:7 (The Destruction of Satan.)
Smyrna 2:8-11	2 <sup>nd</sup> Seal: The red horse 6:3.4	2 <sup>nd</sup> Trumpet: Blood 8:8.9	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vision: The beast from the sea 13:1-10	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vial: Bloody seas 16:3		
Pergamos 2:12-17	3 <sup>rd</sup> Seal: The black horse 6:5.6	3 <sup>rd</sup> Trumpet: Bitter waters 8:10.11	3 <sup>rd</sup> Vision: The beast from the earth 13:11-18	3 <sup>rd</sup> Vial: Bloody rivers and fountains 16:4-7		
Thyatira 2:18-29	4 <sup>th</sup> Seal: The pale horse 6:7.8	4 <sup>th</sup> Trumpet: Darkness 8:12.13	4 <sup>th</sup> Vision: The 144,000 in heaven 14:1-5	4 <sup>th</sup> Vial: Burning heat 16:8.9		
Sardis 3:1-6	5 <sup>th</sup> Seal: The souls under the altar 6:9-11	5 <sup>th</sup> Trumpet: Smoke obscuring the sun-locusts 9:13-21	5 <sup>th</sup> Vision: The flying angels 14:14-20	5 <sup>th</sup> Vial: Darkness 16:10.11		
Philadelphia 3:7-13	6 <sup>th</sup> Seal: The last judgment 6:12-19	6 <sup>th</sup> Trumpet: The army from the east 9:13-21	6 <sup>th</sup> Vision: The last judgment 14:14-20	6 <sup>th</sup> Vial: The army from the east 16:12-16		
Laodicea 3:14-22	Interlude: The church on earth. 7:1-8 The church in heaven. 7:9-17	Interlude: The witnessing church in its sufferings 10:1-11:14	7 <sup>th</sup> Vision: The seven angels with the seven vials. 15:1-8	7 <sup>th</sup> Vial: The end of the world 16:17-21		
Interlude: Prelude to the seven seals	7 <sup>th</sup> Seal: The vision of the seven trumpets introduced 8:11-13	7 <sup>th</sup> Trumpet: The end of the world 11:15-18				