

#53 Revelation 8-12

B R C
Read the Bible. Follow Jesus.

Bible Reading Class, Pastor Warren Wang

Irvine Regional Park



A Bible Reader's Conviction

- All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and *training in righteousness*, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17, NIV)

A Spiritual Journey

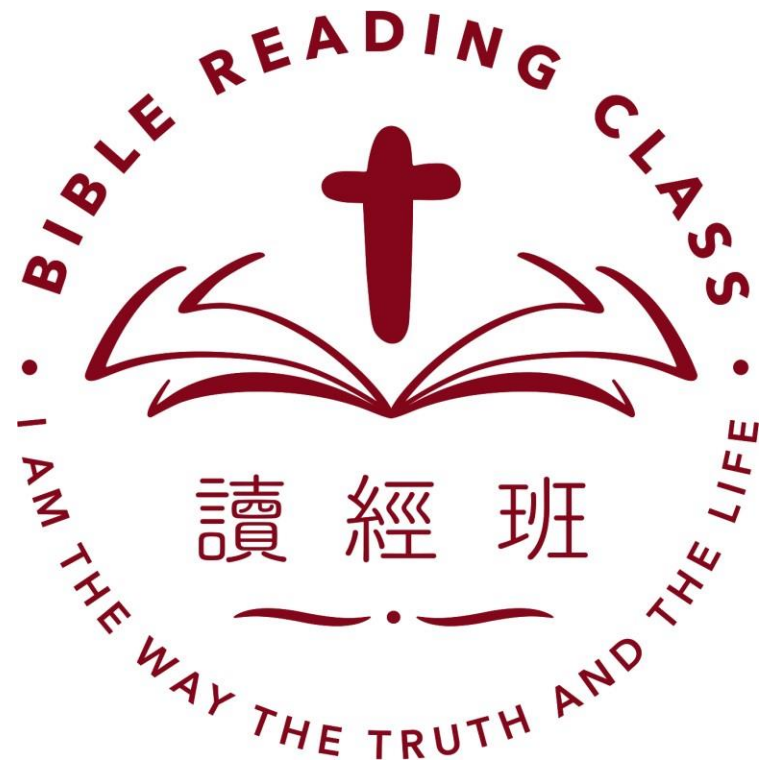
1. May you read the Word of God with reverence, and walk in his will!
2. May the word of the Lord prosper; May He add to your number those who are being saved!
3. May the Lord bless the days you read his Word!



Read the Bible. Follow Jesus.



The Guiding Principles of BRC

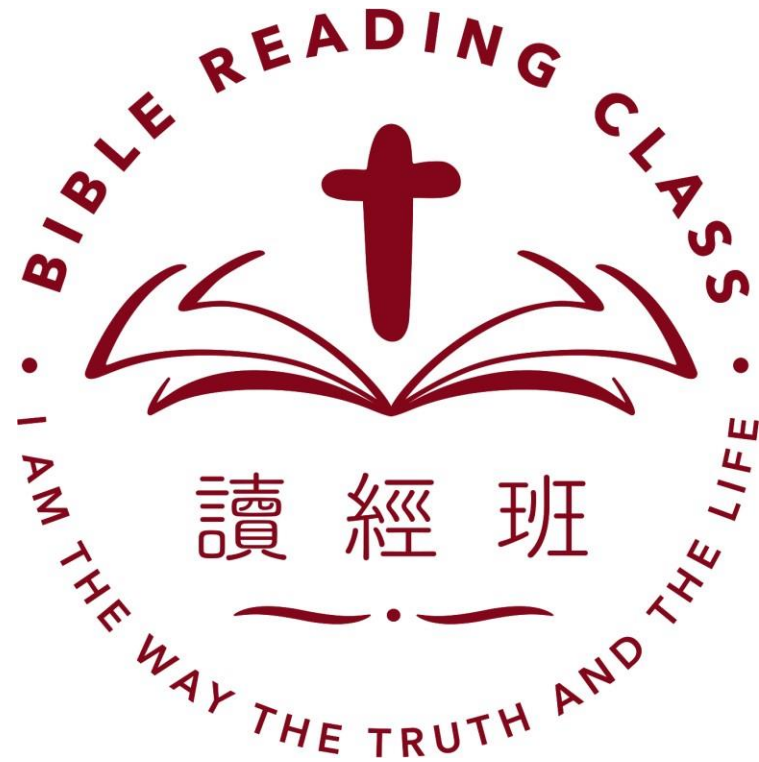


Christ-Centered

Bible-Based

Mission-Minded

Honor System and Agreement of BRC

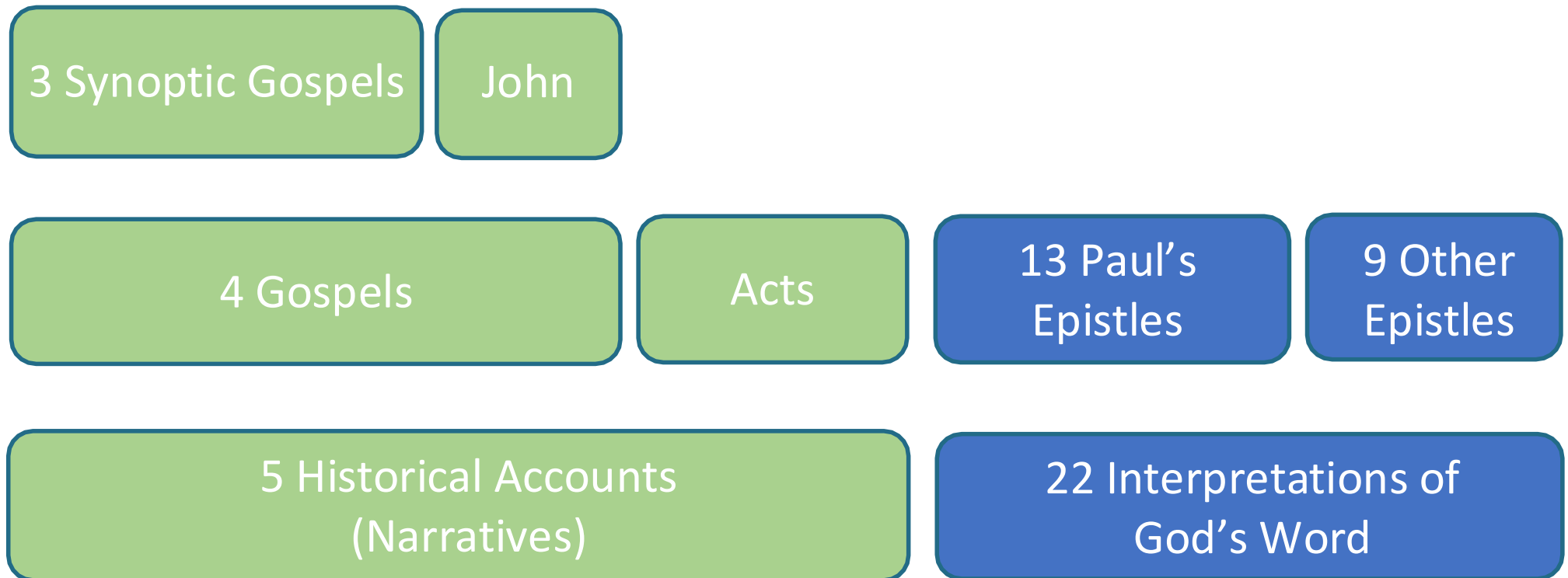


1. I'll complete weekly reading assignment

2. I'll watch weekly teaching video in its entirety

3. I'll complete weekly quiz (closed book)

New Testament Structure





Revelation 8-12

The Two Scrolls of Revelation

- In the Book of Revelation, there are two scrolls: one is **the Scroll Sealed with Seven Seals**, which concerns the history of humanity; the other is **the Book of Life**, which concerns the ultimate destiny of the individual.
- **The Scroll Sealed with Seven Seals**
 - The scroll records the culmination of human history and the ultimate end of all things.
 - Held in the right hand of the One seated on the throne, the scroll signifies that God governs history with his mighty hand.
 - Sealed with seven seals, it indicates that the contents of the scroll are completely closed off.
 - That no one is worthy to open the scroll signifies that, although God is willing to reveal its contents, no one possesses the qualifications to receive it.

The Two Scrolls of Revelation

- **The Scroll Sealed with Seven Seals**

- Only **the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Lamb who was slain**, is worthy to open this scroll. Both the Lion and the Lamb refer to Jesus Christ. In terms of his humanity, Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David; He is the King. In terms of redemption, Jesus is the slain Lamb who gave his life and shed his blood for all people; He is the Savior of humanity.
- Jesus Christ has triumphed; through his own blood, He conquered sin and redeemed people from every nation for God; furthermore, having risen from the dead, He conquered death. He alone is worthy to take the scroll and break its seven seals.

The Two Scrolls of Revelation

- **The Book of Life**

- All who have died must stand before the Great White Throne to face judgment. **Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. (20:15)**
- The Book of Life records the names of the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. If your name is found in the Book of Life, you may enter the Kingdom of Heaven. If your name is **blotted out (3:5)**, you forfeit your citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven.
- In addition, there are other “scrolls” that record what people had done throughout their lifetime. **The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. (20:12)**



Reflection Point



The Meaning of Life, The Progress of History

- Does life have meaning? Does the unfolding of history possess a direction? From the moment we enter the world with a cry, through the years until our hair turns gray, and finally to the moment we return to the earth, what is the significance of our brief sojourn in this human realm? And what is the purpose of the history accumulated by all those who have lived throughout the ages?
- When people are alive, should they seek the meaning of life? Should we strive for a higher goal than “a comfortable life”? It’s better to be more open-minded and free-spirited. “Let us eat and drink,” you say, “for tomorrow we die!” (Isaiah 22:13)
- Or, as the Last Ruler Li put it, are the carved balustrades and jade steps merely things too painful to look back upon? As in Dongpo Jushi’s poem: Is not the grand romance of history nothing but a dream? Do you not see the green hills remain, as do a crimson sunset appear many times? With a pot of cloudy wine, we joyfully meet again; Why not drink freely and wholeheartedly, simply turning the countless tales of past and present into topics for laughter and conversation?



The Meaning of Life, The Progress of History

- The mighty river flows eastward; its waves have swept away the legendary figures of ages past. To the west of the ancient ramparts lies the site of the Red Cliffs, where Zhou Yu of the Three Kingdoms era won his fame. Jagged rocks pierce the clouds; crashing waves shatter against the shore, churning up a thousand drifts of snow. The river landscape is a painting; what a host of heroes once strode this stage!
- I picture Gongjin in those days; newly wed to the fair Xiao Qiao, his bearing heroic and spirited. With a feather fan in hand and a silken turban on his head, amidst lighthearted talk and laughter, he saw the enemy's masts and oars reduced to ash and smoke. My spirit wanders back to that storied past; surely, the sentimental moon would mock me for having turned gray so soon. Life is but a dream; let me pour a cup of wine as an offering to the river and the moon.
- Su Shi (Song Dynasty), "Nian Nu Jiao"



The Meaning of Life, The Progress of History

- The exquisite verses of Su Dongpo may offer temporary relief from our sorrows, yet they cannot fill the void within the soul. Humans instinctively seek meaning; this is not a matter of whether one should or should not do so. We have an innate drive to survive, to live a good life, and to find meaning. Those who possess material abundance but lack a sense of purpose cannot truly live a good life, for they remain spiritually empty.
- A sense of meaning stems from one's personal values; one feels a sense of meaning when doing something deemed valuable. Such endeavors necessarily transcend the self; one feels a sense of worth only by contributing to the nation, society, or family, or by serving a cause greater than oneself. Few people derive a sense of worth merely from enjoying fine food or wearing designer brands. Even if such feelings arise momentarily, they often give way to a profound sense of emptiness once the initial thrill fades and clarity returns.



The Meaning of Life, The Progress of History

- The Book of Revelation tells us that everyone must give an account of their life to God. The fact that **God cares about how I live** gives my life immense significance. For a Christian, ultimate value is found in God; my life, cherished and valued by Him, possesses true worth. How I live and the reasons for my efforts hold profound meaning, simply because God cares about me!
- The Book of Revelation also tells us that the course of history is neither aimless nor meaningless. The rise and fall of hegemonies and the succession of dynasties are merely ripples in the great torrent of history. The river of humanity is flowing toward a destined conclusion; “**what will take place later**” must unfold according to God’s will, culminating in the arrival of the new heaven and the new earth. Viewing life and history through the lens of Revelation fosters a positive mindset: my life has meaning, and humanity’s future is bright. [Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. \(Psalm 30:5\)](#)



The Meaning of Life, The Progress of History

- Compared to human history, my life is brief. Compared to heaven and earth, human history is brief. Yet even heaven and earth shall pass away; the only truly eternal one is God. Meaning lies in eternity; meaning lies in God.
- They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded.
- But you remain the same, and your years will never end.
- The children of your servants will live in your presence; their descendants will be established before you. (Psalm 102:26-28)

The End of All Things

- **Revelation means unveiling**

- The original meaning of the word “Revelation” is “unveiling.” In accordance with God’s will, John beheld a vision while on the island of Patmos. In this vision, God unveiled mysteries that had previously been hidden, revealing “what will take place later,” that is, the ultimate destiny of all things. As the Lamb opened the seven seals, these hidden mysteries were revealed one by one; the Book of Revelation is, in essence, John’s “record of that vision”.

- **What will take place later**

- In accordance with God’s will, this world will one day pass away; a series of events will unfold, and then the end of all things will come. The Book of Revelation refers to these as “what will take place later,” signifying that God has ordained them and that everything John saw will certainly come to pass.



Four Seals and Four Riders

- **The Lamb Opened the Seven Seals**

- These “what will take place later” were written on a scroll sealed with seven seals. A search was conducted in heaven and on earth, yet no one was found who could break the seven seals; consequently, John wept bitterly.
- At this point, one of the twenty-four elders pointed out that the Lamb, who was slain, had triumphed and was worthy to open the seven seals. Then, the Lamb took the scroll from the hand of the one seated on the throne and opened the seven seals one by one.

Four Seals and Four Riders

- **Opening the First Seal: The White Horse Rider, Conquest**

- I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest. (6:2)

1. The Lamb opened the first four seals; as each seal was opened, a horse rider appeared, and each horse rider brought a calamity.
2. White represents conquest. The white horse rider appears as a conqueror; wearing a crown, he wages aggressive wars, winning victory after victory and conquering the world by force.

Four Seals and Four Riders

- **Opening the Second Seal: The Red Horse Rider, Slaughter**
 - Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword. (6:4)
 1. Red represents bloodshed. The red horse rider appears as a slayer, wielding a great sword and taking peace from the earth.
 2. He not only killed people himself but also incited them to kill one another, staining the earth with blood.

Four Seals and Four Riders

- **Opening the Third Seal: The Black Horse Rider, Famine**
 - When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, “Two pounds of wheat for a day’s wages, and six pounds of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!” (6:5-6)
 1. Black represents famine. The black horse rider holds a pair of scales, signifying a scarcity of food that requires careful rationing.
 2. A denarius of silver represented a day’s wages, while two pounds of wheat constituted a day’s food supply; this signified skyrocketing grain prices, where a day’s earnings were barely enough to sustain life. Barley, a coarse grain, was cheaper than wheat but less nutritious, with six pounds of barley for a denarius. While oil and wine were ordinary staples in normal times, they became scarce commodities during a famine and were not to be squandered.

Four Seals and Four Riders

- **Opening the Fourth Seal: The Pale Horse Rider, Death**

- I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth. (6:8)

1. Pale represents death. The Bible states that the rider of the pale horse is named “Death,” and he has a companion named “Hades,” which is the place where the dead go.
2. The master and servant, two people, used various methods to kill one-fourth of the people on earth.

Four Seals and Four Riders

- **Summary of the Four Riders**

1. The calamities brought about by the four riders can be summarized as “man-made disasters.” Conquest (wars of aggression), slaughter, famine, and death: their primary causes all stem from humanity.
2. Before the end of the world, the calamities humanity brings upon itself will escalate dramatically. The days of abundance and peaceful tranquility are over; unprecedented disasters are about to arrive.
3. According to the Book of Revelation, the disaster at the end of the world is called “The Great Tribulation” (7:14).

The Fifth Seal

- **Opening the Fifth Seal: The Martyr under the Altar**

- When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been. (6:9-11)
1. In ancient times, the blood of sacrificial animals was poured out at the base of the altar. These people, slain for the sake of the Lord’s word, were like sacrifices offered up, crying out from beneath the altar.
 2. They were given white robes, signifying that they are people redeemed by God and are also overcomers.
 3. They must wait for a time until the number of martyrs is complete. God has his plan and timetable; all things unfold according to God’s will, not human desire.

The Sixth Seal

- **Opening the Sixth Seal: Changes in the Natural World**

- I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. (6:12-13)

1. As soon as the sixth seal was opened, heaven and earth shook: the earth quaked violently, stars fell, the heavens shifted, and islands were moved, underscoring the extraordinary changes occurring in the natural world.
2. These changes made people realize that this was the work of God. They sought refuge in caves and the rocks, saying, “The great day of God’s wrath has come, and who can withstand it?”

Between the Sixth and Seventh Seals

- **The 144,000**
 - “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. (7:3-4)
 - 1. **Two Instances of Sealing**: The book of Revelation records two occasions of sealing. The first occurs during the opening of the sixth seal, when an angel places God’s seal upon “the foreheads of the servants of God.” The second takes place during the opening of the seventh seal, when the beast from the sea marks people on their right hands or foreheads with Satan’s seal. The discussion here concerns the first sealing.
 - 2. **The 144,000**: Who are these 144,000 people? This question has sparked considerable debate. Certain heretical groups, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, claim that the 144,000 belong exclusively to their own sect. Aside from the fact that this claim is demonstrably wrong, there are two primary interpretations: First, given the mention of the twelve tribes, these individuals are Jews who have come to faith in the Lord and are saved. Second, the figure of 144,000 is symbolic, as is the reference to the twelve tribes, representing the faithful believers who remain on earth during the Great Tribulation.

Between the Sixth and Seventh Seals

- **The Multitude in White Robes**

- After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” (7:9-10)
1. While the events of the sixth seal were still unfolding, John saw a countless multitude in heaven, dressed in white robes, loudly praising God and the Lamb. This marks yet another account of heavenly worship, following those recorded in chapters 4 and 5.
 2. Why are they dressed in white robes? Because “these are the ones who have come out of the Great Tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” The blood of the Lamb represents redemption, signifying that these are people who came to faith and were saved during the great tribulation.
 3. They come from every nation, tribe, people, and language, once again emphasizing that God loves the world and that anyone who believes in Jesus can be saved.

The Seventh Seal

- **Opening the Seventh Seal**

- When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. (8:1-2)
- **Seventh Seal**: The seventh seal is the final one; only when it is opened are the contents of the scroll revealed. The opening of the first six seals served merely as a prelude, the contents of the scroll remained unknown, and it is only upon the opening of the seventh seal that the main subject is introduced.
- **The First Angel Sounded His Trumpet:**
- **Scripture**: The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down on the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. (8:7)

The Seventh Seal: 4 Plagues and 3 Woes

- **Opening the Seventh Seal**

- After the seventh seal was opened, seven angels sounded their trumpets, and plagues occurred with each blast.
- These seven trumpets can be divided into two parts: “four plagues and three woes.” The first four brought four plagues, each destroying one-third of a certain part of the natural world (land, sea, water, and celestial phenomena). The last three bring three woes; with each trumpet blast, a woe befalls humanity.
- The natural plagues brought by the first trumpet damaged the land, and “hail and fire” destroyed one-third of the “earth, trees, and grass.”

The Second Trumpet

- **The Second Angel Sounded His Trumpet:**
 - The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. (8:8-9)
 - The plague brought by the second trumpet inflicted damage upon the ocean; it was as if a “great burning mountain” had been cast into the waters, causing the seawater to spoil and destroying one-third of the sea, the marine life within it, and the ships upon it.

The Third Trumpet

- **The Third Angel Sounded His Trumpet:**

- The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water—the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter. (8:10-11)
- The plague brought by the third trumpet damaged water sources; “a great star, blazing like a torch” named “Wormwood” (meaning “bitter”) fell from the sky, turning one-third of the waters bitter (for instance, the water of the Dead Sea is extremely bitter and undrinkable due to its very high mineral concentration) and destroying one-third of the water supply, causing many people to die of thirst.

The Fourth Trumpet

- **The Fourth Angel Sounded His Trumpet:**
 - The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night. (8:12)
 - The natural plague brought by the fourth trumpet damaged the celestial bodies; one-third of the “sun, moon, and stars” were struck and plunged into darkness, leaving the earth without light for one-third of the time. When God first created the heavens and the earth, the initial step was “Let there be light.” Now that one-third of the light has vanished, it represents a reversal of the act of creation.

The First Four Trumpets

- **Summary of the First Four Trumpets**

- The opening of the first four seals can be summarized as “man-made calamities,” whereas the sounding of the first four trumpets by the angels can be summarized as “natural plagues.” In the end times, man-made calamities will occur first, followed by natural plagues.
- The four plagues brought by the four trumpets each destroyed one-third of the land, sea, water sources, and celestial bodies. The Bible does not explain the details of these plagues; it only tells us that they will occur.

Three Woes: The 5th, 6th, 7th Trumpets

- **Woe! Woe! Woe!**

- As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: “Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!” (8:13)
- Before the angels sounded the final three trumpets, a flying eagle proclaimed in mid-air: “Woe! Woe! Woe!” There were three “woes” in total, with each trumpet blast bringing a great calamity.

- **The Fifth Angel Sounded His Trumpet: The Locust Scourge**

- Scripture: And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (9:3-4)

The Fifth Trumpet

- **Woe! Woe! Woe!**

- As soon as the fifth number sounded, the first of the three “woes” came to the world. This disaster did not affect God’s people, for the locusts tortured only those who do not bear the seal of God.
- Those tortured by the locusts long for death but cannot find it (During those days people will seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them. 9:6), which could be extremely painful.
- What are these locusts? We cannot say for certain. They did not harm trees but only people; something ordinary locusts cannot do. What is certain is that they were instruments of God’s judgment upon mankind.

The Sixth Trumpet

- **The Sixth Angel Sounded His Trumpet: The Fire Horse Disaster**
 - The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. (9:17-18)
 - Just as the locusts mentioned earlier were not literal locusts, these horses that breathe fire, smoke, and sulfur are not literal horses either. While the locusts caused people to seek death in vain, these horses possess immense destructive power, killing one-third of the people on earth.

Unrepentant People

- The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts. (9:20-21)
- This passage reveals two things to us: First, the human heart is exceedingly hard. Just as Pharaoh's heart was hardened, refusing to submit to God even after the ten plagues, the plagues associated with the six trumpets also fail to bring about repentance. The survivors continue to worship demons and idols, refusing to turn to God. Second, people act in accordance with what they worship. Because these people worship demons and various idols, they engage in murder, sorcery, sexual immorality, and theft. Jesus taught his disciples how to discern people: do not merely listen to what they say, but look at their fruit: By their fruit you will recognize them (Matthew 7:16). Some claim to believe in the Lord and call themselves Christians, yet they truly worship money, power, or certain ideologies, bearing fruit such as jealousy, strife, disorder, and all manner of evil deeds. In contrast, the Lord's disciples bear the fruit of peace-loving, considerate, full of mercy, and righteousness (refer to James 3:16-18).

God's Unrolled Words, Sweet and Bitter

- He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He said to me, “Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but ‘in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.’” I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. (10:2,9-10)
- As the seven seals are opened, the Word of God, like an unrolled scroll, is revealed. The angel said: The mystery of God will be accomplished, just as He announced to his servants the prophets (10:7). From the ancient prophets to John, who beheld the future, God has not hidden his Word from his people. The Bible we hold in our hands comes from God’s revelation, and we are called to heed and obey it. God’s Word is neither solely sweet nor solely bitter; it is both. It offers both comfort and rebuke, instruction and correction, blessing and warning. When we partake of God’s Word, we cannot choose only the sweet while rejecting the bitter, or read only the words of comfort while ignoring those of rebuke. We must receive God’s Word with a reverent heart; its sweetness is like honey, nourishing our souls, while its bitterness acts like potent medicine, healing our ailments.

Between the Sixth and Seventh Trumpets

- **The Two Witnesses**

- And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” ... Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. (11:3-7)
- During the period of the sixth trumpet, two witnesses of extraordinary power preach for the Lord for three and a half years (1,260 days), calling upon people even at the very last moment to repent and believe in the Lord, so as to avoid the coming hell and eternal perdition.
- They will eventually be martyred, dying at the hands of the beast (Satan’s messenger) that came up from the Abyss.

Between the Sixth and Seventh Trumpets

- **The Two Witnesses**

- Who are these two witnesses? Some say they are Enoch and Elijah, as they are the only two individuals who did not experience death. Since the Bible states that it is appointed for man to die once, they returned to earth to undergo death before returning to God's presence.
- According to the Scriptures, they are more like Moses (who had the authority to turn water into blood) and Elijah (who stopped the rain).
- In fact, there is no need to speculate about the identities of the two; we need only know that God loves the world and, in the end, sent his servants to call people to repentance. These two servants even suffered martyrdom for doing so.

Sin Seems to Triumph, but Christ Has Reigned

- The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.” And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. (11:15-17)
- When the two prophets were killed by “the beast that comes up from the Abyss,” the people of the earth rejoiced and exchanged gifts with one another. Sin seemed to triumph, and darkness shrouded the land. Yet at that very moment, the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and a loud voice proclaimed: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and Christ, and He will reign for ever and ever!” Brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus is forever the victor. Do not look at the surface or the temporary; see instead that Christ is already reigning, and that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of the Lord Christ.
- In moments of deepest disappointment, one must hold fast to faith. In the darkest of times, one must look to the Lord. Even when witnesses are being slain, one must behold the throne of Christ. Though the world may stand on the side of darkness, rejoicing and exchanging gifts, the disciples must remain steadfast in the conviction that the final victory belongs to Christ!

The Seventh Trumpet

- **The Seventh Angel Sounded His Trumpet: The Woe of the Devil**
 - Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born. (12:3-4)
 - The enormous red dragon is the devil, and the Bible says: The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. (12:9)
 - The woman about to give birth represents God's chosen people—Israel in ancient times, and the Church following Christ's redemption; the Church is the collective term for all who believe in the Lord.

The Seventh Trumpet

- **The Seventh Angel Sounded His Trumpet: The Woe of the Devil**
 - The boy born to the woman is the Messiah, that is, Jesus Christ.
 - The enormous dragon sought to devour the woman's child; this signifies the Devil's attempt to thwart God's plan for the salvation of humanity and to harm Jesus Christ. However, Jesus rose from the dead, triumphing over the Devil, who held the power of death.
 - The enormous dragon returned to heaven to wage war against the angels but was defeated by the archangel Michael and his angels, and was hurled to the earth.
 - Unable to prevail in heaven, the enormous dragon persecuted the church on earth and dispatched his two powerful henchmen, the beast from the sea and the beast from the earth, to attack God's church.

The Accuser's Dead End

- Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. (12:7-10)
- The original meaning of “Satan” (Satanas, the Accuser) is “accuser” or “adversary”; in this passage, he is clearly identified as “the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night.” It begins with a war in heaven: the archangel Michael and his angels stood on one side, while Satan and his angels stood on the other. They fought, and Michael emerged victorious, casting Satan and his angels down to the earth. Note that Satan is not qualified to fight against God; he could only contend with Michael, and he lost.

The Accuser's Dead End

- A loud voice proclaims that Satan and his angels, having been hurled down to earth, will fight against the brothers. Yet, through the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, the brothers shall triumph over Satan. Having lost both heaven and earth, Satan has reached a dead end; his defeat is total and absolute.
- The blood of the Lamb renders Satan's accusations completely null and void. Satan does not accuse without cause; he has evidence and knows every person's transgressions, yet his accusations are ineffective. This is because the Lamb has borne all our sins, sacrificed his body, shed his blood, and paid the debt of sin in full. All who believe in the Lord and are saved stand righteous, not as sinners, before God. We triumph over Satan through the blood of the Lamb, not by our own strength.
- The Book of Zechariah records a story in which Satan accuses the High Priest Joshua but is rebuked by God:

The Accuser's Dead End

- Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?” Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.” Then he said to Joshua, “See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you.” (Zechariah 3:1-4)
- The High Priest represents God’s chosen people; thus, when Satan accuses the High Priest Joshua, he is accusing God’s chosen people. God rebukes Satan, removes Joshua’s filthy clothes, symbolizing deliverance from sin, and clothes him in fine garments. In Christ, God’s people, those redeemed through faith in Jesus Christ, also take off filthy clothes and put on fine garments, making Satan’s accusations completely null and void.

The Way to Victory

- They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. (12:11)
- How do we overcome Satan? It depends on two things: first, the blood of the Lamb. The redemption of Jesus Christ is the basis of our victory. The blood of the Lamb saves me, and the blood of the Lamb also enables me to overcome. The Jews seek after signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; if you preach signs and wisdom, people will not be saved, and if you place your faith in signs and wisdom, you will not overcome. Only Jesus Christ and Him crucified can bring both salvation and victory.
- Second, victory comes through the word of their testimony (NIV, NASB, NKJV). Without testimony, there is no victory; with testimony, there is victory. This is God's principle. Testimony represents life; whether for an individual or a church, the nature of the life determines the nature of the testimony. The message conveyed by your testimony, whether spoken with the lips or expressed through actions, enables you to triumph over the devil.

The Way to Victory

- The fact is that if you believe in the prosperity gospel, your testimony is built on health and wealth; once those are taken away, you are devastated. Far from triumphing over Satan, you risk losing your faith, doubting God, or even ceasing to believe in Him altogether. If you believe in an ideology that has been packaged as the Christian faith, and that ideology subsequently falls out of favor or becomes an object of scorn, you might discard the package entirely and stop believing in Jesus along with it.
- If you believe in Jesus Christ and his cross from the very beginning, finding salvation through the blood of the Lamb, you will never lose that salvation; not only will you be saved, but you will also be victorious. God stands behind the cross as the supreme authority of the entire universe; no power can withstand this authority, not even Satan.
- Your testimony is whatever you believe. If you believe in Jesus Christ, your testimony is Jesus Christ; Christ has only victory, never defeat.

The Beast Out of the Sea

- **The Beast Out of the Sea: Antichrist**

- And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name ... It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. (13:1-6)
- The authority of this beast is bestowed by the dragon; thus, its status is subordinate to the dragon, and it serves as a servant of Satan. It is generally believed to be the Antichrist, also known as the rebellion, the man of lawlessness, who is to appear in the end times; he claims to be God and opens his mouth to blaspheme the God of heaven.
- The Antichrist possesses great power; he wages war against the saints and prevails. He wields immense political and military might, subjecting the people of God to severe persecution.

The Beast Out of the Earth

- **The Beast Out of the Earth: False Prophets**
 - Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon ... It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads. (13:11-16)
 - This beast resembles a lamb but speaks like a dragon, indicating that it is in disguise; while it appears to be a harmless lamb, the words it utters are lies intended to deceive the world.
 - He calls upon the people of the world to worship the first beast, the Antichrist, and to receive a mark on their hands or foreheads, which is the mark of the Devil. This beast is generally considered to be **the false prophet of the end times**; possessing power that surpasses all previous false prophets, he is able to deceive the entire world, leading people to worship the Antichrist and accept the mark of the Devil.

The Number of the Beast

- **The number of beasts: 666**
 - This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666. (13:18)
 - The number of the beast is the number of a man, signifying that the Antichrist will appear in human form. Since ancient times, many have sought to unravel the mystery of 666; some have identified the figure as the Roman Emperor Nero, others as Hitler, while many have proposed various other imaginative theories.
 - Another interpretation holds that the number seven signifies completeness and represents God, whereas six represents a desire to emulate God yet falling just short, symbolizing Satan. The true Triune God is represented by 777, while the “counterfeit trinity” of Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet can only attain 666.

Who Has Insight

- Who has insight (NIV) or who has understanding (NASB, NKJV) can calculate the number of the beast. The beast's number is something to be “calculated” and is not recognized at a mere glance but requires a process of discernment. How is it calculated? Those who possess insight are the ones who can work it out. This is not worldly cleverness, but heavenly wisdom. The beast employs sophisticated camouflage that is not easily penetrated; he performs miracles and utters boastful words, deceiving the inhabitants of the earth, yet he cannot fool those with true insight. They see through the beast's disguise and calculate his number, revealing that it is nothing other than the number of a man! That man is, in fact, the beast.
- Many believers are intrigued by the Book of Revelation; whenever an epidemic or war breaks out, they wonder if the end times have arrived. Many so-called “preachers” seize upon events like pandemics, deteriorating US-China relations, or the Russia-Ukraine war to speak at length about Revelation as a way to draw crowds. Yet, the discerning remain calm; they see through the smokescreen to the heart of the matter, calculate the number of the Beast, and distinguish the genuine from the counterfeit.