

God's Planned Future

(7) Trumpet Judgements and

Interlude 3

Revelation 8:1-14:20

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As John moves forward through the Revelation, he has passed the 3 ½ year, half time point, of the 7 year tribulation. Antichrist has established world dominance; and he has committed the *abomination of desolation* where he entered the temple in Jerusalem and stopped the Jewish sacrifices. He has also set up an image of himself to be worshipped as God in the temple, fulfilling Daniel 11:36-37. This triggered the 2nd half of the 7 year tribulation, which Jesus calls the *great tribulation* (Mat 24:21). War, famine, catastrophic death, martyrdom of those coming to faith in Christ, and global anarchy have become the new normal for planet earth during the birth pains of God's judgement.

Seal 7 Revelation 8:1

When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

The **Seventh Seal** consists of a further set of seven Trumpet judgments. As Jesus opens seal number 7, it reveals the first trumpet judgement. Abruptly, heaven comes to a standstill as they watch the horror of the promised *Day of the Lord*. Isaiah prophesied of this time; *behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their*

light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light. I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless (Isaiah 13:9-11).

The defiant world will scoff at God, they will put their hope in antichrist who shall continually offer peace but never deliver it. Peter speaks of this time during the tribulation in 2 Peter 3:9-10; *the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise* (of judgement) *as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.* ¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*

As the seventh seal reveals the day of the Lord in Revelation 8:1-5, the judgements which are about to take place are so alarming that even the angelic hosts stop silent for half an hour. All heaven is mute and dumbfounded. Every mighty angelic being, the four living creatures, the Cherubim, the Seraphim, the 24 elders, all are stunned into silence. This is the only time we read of this in Scripture, when heaven stops worship for an entire 30 minutes.

The scene is graphic; standing before God are 7 angels, given 7 trumpets for the purpose of announcing more intensifying judgements (Rev 8:2). Then an 8th angel steps up to the altar before God with *much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne* (Rev 8:3). *Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake* (Rev 8:5).

Apart from the obvious scene here, we get a glimpse of the timeless value of prayer. When we presently pray, we have an impact not only on the 'now' but also on the future. This 8th angel presents to God *much incense* of worship accompanied by the *prayers of all the saints*. Somehow God collects and stores up the prayers of His saints waiting for a future response which can only happen with the 7 trumpet judgements.

Trumpets 1 – 4 (Revelation 8:7-12)

Trumpets one, two, three, and four are sounded in rapid succession as there are numerous remaining judgements waiting to be unleashed in less than a 3 year period.

The 1st trumpet releases thunder and lighting, an earthquake, hail, and fire mixed with blood are hurled upon the earth. **One third** of the remaining earth is burnt up. With that comes a chain reaction – vegetation dies, therefore animals die, and more of the world's food chain abruptly comes to an end (:7).

The 2nd trumpet of verse 8 tells of releasing what could easily be a series of small meteorites crashing down from the heavens into the sea. **One third** of the sea is transformed into blood, and one third of the world's shipping and commerce are destroyed.

The smell of decomposing carcasses in oceans and washed up on beaches will be vile. Breathing the air will be disgusting due to the stench of death from 1/3 of all living creatures in the sea (:8-9). With 1/3 of the shipping gone, global supply of goods including food and military supplies will suffer greatly.

The 3rd trumpet of verse 10 sees the releasing of what seems to be a single huge ball of heavenly fire, a massive meteorite of some description, falling upon the earth in such a way as to impact **one third** of the world's rivers and springs of fresh water.

Revelation 8:11 describes this falling heavenly body, *the name of the star is Wormwood* (bitterness). *A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter.* With the contamination of such a large percentage of drinking water, many more will die of poisoning. Similarly, the death of freshwater fish and other creatures will further rob mankind of food. Again, the smell of tens of millions of rotting fish will be overwhelming.

The 4th trumpet of verse 12 tells of the releasing of some kind of divine plague upon the heavenly bodies. *One third* of the sun, moon, and stars are darkened, causing a huge reduction in both daylight and nightlight. This will continue the devastating effect upon plant growth, and therefore food supplies will fail even more as much needed crops fail. Temperatures will drop dramatically. Extreme weather patterns will globally behave abruptly and unpredictably.

Apart from anything else, this will create issues from Vitamin D deficiency and insufficient melatonin levels, causing sleep deprivation amongst other mental health problems. On top of this, the 24 hour lunar cycle will be disrupted greatly. *And on that day, declares the Lord GOD, I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in*

broad daylight. ¹⁰ *I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation...* (Amos 8:9-10).

These events will not simply be random natural disasters. They will be God's judgements, and it will be obvious by the fact that through each of the 4 trumpet blasts, **one third** are impacted. One third of the earth and the trees burned up (:7), one third of the sea turned to blood (:8), one third of the sea creatures killed and one third of ships destroyed (:9), and one third of the sun, moon, and star are blackened (:12).

Revelation 8:13, *then I (John) looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!"*

Things are about to get a lot worse. "Woe, woe, woe", is another way of saying "Damned, damned, damned!" The triple "Woe" expresses an exclamation of grief with increasing intensity upon the world. These next 3 trumpet judgments are 3 additional "Woe" judgements *to those who dwell on the earth*, again emphasising the severity of them upon the unbelieving and unrepentant world.

Trumpet 5 – Woe 1 Revelation 9:1-11

And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit (Rev 9:1).

At the fifth trumpet a star falls to earth. The “*he*” refers to the “*star*” which is not a lifeless object like a rock. Rather, this is speaking of an angelic being as described in Job 38:7, *when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?* This male star seems to indicate Lucifer. Satan (Isa 14:12-15; Eze 28:12-16) will be the one God employs to open *the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft* (Rev 9:2). As Satan opens the gates of the shaft leading to the *bottomless pit*, dense polluting smoke bellows into the atmosphere darkening the sun. Atmospheric pollution erupting from the hellish *bottomless pit* as never seen before will engulf the planet.

Satan, under God’s authority, will then release a huge number of demons from the bottomless pit who have been bound there for most likely millennia. Revelation chapter 9 shall be fulfilment of Joel 2:1-11. Revelation 9:7-10 describe these creatures. *In appearance the locusts were like horses*

prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces,⁸ their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth;⁹ they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle.¹⁰ They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails.

These fearsome demonic locusts from the bottomless pit are given power to torture mankind for five months (:5). They will be forbidden to damage the vegetation. Their entire focus will be on tormenting mankind, causing intense pain like the sting of a Scorpion (:3) for the entire five months. But they will not be able to kill.

Only those believers with the seal of God will be spared. These protected ones will include the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Rev 7:1-8), plus those who have repented and put faith in Christ.

The agony these demonic locusts cause will be so intense that people will seek death during those days but will not find it because God will not permit them to die (:6).

Consequently, stung people will also suffer the pain from injuries from attempted suicide that fail.

This demonic army will *have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon* (Rev 9:11). This is not Satan, but a high ranking demon in Satan's army, as this king of demons is *of the bottomless pit*. He was released from the bottomless pit along with the demonic locusts. Plus, it was Satan who was authorised by God to open the bottomless pit from the outside.

Having described trumpet 5, which is the 1st woe, John declares that *the first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come* (Rev 9:12).

Trumpet 6 – Woe 2 Revelation 9:13-19

Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God,¹⁴ saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.”¹⁵ So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind (Rev 9:13-15).

The sixth trumpet sounds, and the sixth angel is instructed to release four angelic demons who had been held captive in preparation by God for this exact time. The fact that these 4 angels have been *bound* for this precise time tells us that they are not holy angels, but demons. God had sovereignly prepared these 4 demons for the purpose of killing one third of mankind in this 6th trumpet, 2nd woe, judgement.

These 4 demons gather an enormous army of mounted troops (Two hundred million), which carry out the mass slaughter of billions of people. In Revelation 9:17-19, John attempts to describe this great army. *And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the colour of fire and of sapphire and of sulphur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulphur came out of their mouths.* ¹⁸ *By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulphur coming out of their mouths.* ¹⁹ *For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound.*

This army will march across the planet ruthlessly slaughtering everyone in their path. This demon motivated

army will kill without mercy and without discrimination. John's language also suggests the possibility of advanced weapon technology being used by this army.

Despite the huge number of deaths, the surviving population still refuse to repent of their idolatry, murders, witchcraft, and sexual immorality (Rev 9:20-21).

This concludes **trumpet 6 and woe 2** judgements.

Interlude # 2

At this point in the Revelation, John pauses his timeline narrative to give us **Interlude # 2**. Throughout Revelation 10:1-11:14, John looks back and provides us with greater detail of what has been happening so far.

Revelation 10:1 introduces us to *another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire.*

As always in Scripture, this angel is male, and he is another angel of the same kind as the 6th angel who blew the 6th trumpet (Rev 9:13). This angel is NOT Jesus Christ, as Jesus remains unseen until Revelation 19:7.

In the heavenly ranking of angels, this was a *mighty* ranking angel. The Greek word for mighty suggests that he is forcibly powerful and valiant (Courageous). Verses 1 and 2 tell us that the appearance of this courageous angel is huge and fearsome. He not just big, he is huge! He didn't simply stand in the sand with 1 foot in the water and the other in the wet sand. No, he stood with one foot in the surf and the other on the dry sandhills – he is massive in stature. His face shines brilliantly bright like the sun and his commanding voice is exceedingly loud like that of a lion roaring.

As he travels from heaven to earth, entering earth's atmosphere he wraps cloud around himself as if it were a cloak. He adorns his head with a rainbow as if it were a hat, and his mighty legs appear like pillars of blazing fire. This holy angel is extraordinary, he's unparalleled in God's arsenal of heavenly beings.

What's more, this *mighty angel* held *a little scroll open in his hand* (Rev 10:2a). In context, this little scroll is a miniature extract of the 7th trumpet judgement which is about to take place, and it is to be eaten by John. The little scroll was already open and is small enough that John takes it and eats it (Rev 10:9-10). This scroll would have looked tiny in the hand of such a *mighty angel*, and it tasted sweet

in John's mouth yet turned his stomach bitter upon swallowing.

When this *mighty angel* roars out his lion-like call, there follows the sound of 7 thunders in response (Rev 10:3-4). These 7 thunders are not angels, yet they are more than unintelligent sound waves reverberating through the clouds. They are intelligent, disembodied beings manifesting as thunder. They respond to the *mighty angel* with thunderous intelligent words. Their speech intelligently communicates understandable truth which John intended to write down, but the voice from heaven stopped him writing the words of the thunders (Rev 10:4b).

In Revelation 11:1-2 John measures the temple in Jerusalem which will be overrun by Gentile rebels for 42 months, 3 ½ years, which is the 2nd half of the tribulation which was triggered by antichrist. Jerusalem is hijacked for the remaining 3 ½ years by Gentile insurgents.

But, by contrast, we also see God's evangelistic grace at work at the same time. As covered in lesson 6, 1st were the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, who are protected by God and continue evangelising. 2nd as seen in Revelation 11:1-12, are the 2 witnesses of God. Their prophetic ministry lasts 3 ½

years also. While it's possible that their time may begin in the 1st half of the tribulation and span through into the 2nd half, it is more likely to be wholly in the 2nd half of the tribulation. It is quite possible that God sends His 2 witnesses to earth at the time antichrist commits the *abomination of desolation*.

As antichrist proudly declares himself to be god (Dan 11:37), these 2 witnesses of Yahweh shall boldly counter his false claims by declaring the truth. Until the end of their 3 ½ years of ministry, antichrist will not be able to silence these 2 witnesses. *And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. ⁶ They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire* (Rev 11:5-6).

Towards the end of the 2 witnesses ministry time, Revelation 11:7-13 tells us that the beast (antichrist) will war against them and finally kill them. While their bodies lay dead in a street of Jerusalem, the world celebrates their deaths by exchanging gifts.

Revelation 11:11-13 further explains the extraordinary events that conclude the ministry of these 2 witnesses on earth. *But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.* ¹² *Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here!” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them.* ¹³ *And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.*

As God calls His 2 resurrected witnesses' home to heaven, while rising in a cloud, they are being watched by their enemies. In the same hour there's a massive earthquake in Jerusalem with 1/10 of the city destroyed and 7000 people killed. The survivors of the earthquake are terrified and *“gave glory to the God of heaven.”* This phrase is not a reference to people's salvation or even worship. Rather, they shall acknowledge the God of Heaven as the author and cause of the 2 witnesses' resurrection, ascension, and the devastating earthquake.

John concludes this 2nd Interlude of explanation with the words, *the second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come* (Rev 11:14).

Trumpet 7 – Woe 3 Revelation 11:15-18

In Revelation 11:15, John saw that *the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”*

This is the initiation of the final stage of God making the kingdom of the world to be the kingdom of His Son Jesus Christ.

At this time heaven rejoices in worship (11:16-17) as they hear the 7th trumpet blast, opening of the final 7 bowls of God’s wrath which is about to be poured out upon the wicked world. It should be noted also that this 3rd and final “Woe” continues through to the very end of the tribulation when Christ returns to vanquish His enemies in chapter 19.

These final days and months of demonic and human rebellion upon the earth will see the worst wickedness ever seen unfolding upon the earth. John records that *the nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the*

prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth (Rev 11:18). Full and final divine justice is about to be unleashed through a rapid pouring out of 7 bowls of God's wrath.

This concludes **trumpet 7, but not woe 3** judgements. At this point in the Revelation, John pauses again in his timeline narrative to present **Interlude # 3** from Revelation 11:19-14:20. Following this 3rd Interlude, the 7 bowl judgements shall be administered.

Interlude # 3 (Revelation 11:19-14:20)

As John considers all that he is witnessing, he sees considerable information about the events during this 2nd 3 ½ year part of the 7 year tribulation which he now updates us on. John not only looks backwards for more detail but also includes a clearer glimpse of what lays ahead.

Satan (the dragon), the Beast (antichrist), the False Prophet (the 2nd beast), and the image of the beast exercise the limits of authority permitted to them by God.

Revelation 12:1-6 gives a snapshot of Jewish messianic history spanning from the birth of Jesus to the half-time

point of the tribulation. John sees Satan's desire to concur Christ from past to future.

Summarising Revelation 12:1-6, John sees a woman (Israel) *clothed with the sun, ...on her head a crown of twelve stars* (the 12 tribes of Israel). *She* (Israel) *was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth.* ³ *And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon* (Satan), *with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.* ⁴ *His* (Satan's) *tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven* (fallen angels) *and cast them to the earth. And the dragon* (Satan) *stood before the woman* (Mary) *who was about to give birth, so that when she* (Mary) *bore her child* (Jesus) *he* (Satan) *might devour it.* ⁵ *She gave birth to a male child* (baby Jesus), *one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne* (Jesus' ascension), ⁶ *and the woman* (Israel) *fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.* This leaves Israel hidden from Satan and provided for by God for the last 3 ½ years of the tribulation, somewhere in a secret desert place.

In Revelation 12:7-9 John also sees that at some point during the tribulation, *war arose in heaven, Michael and his*

angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon (Satan) and his angels fought back, ⁸ but he (Satan) was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world - he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. This war in heaven marks the final time when Satan and his demons would every be permitted into heaven by God's invitation. This also tells of the final time when God permits His holy angels to do battle with evil fallen angels.

John then hears *a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers (Satan) has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God (Rev 12:10).* Never again will Satan have access to God to accuse God's people.

In fact, Satan will never look upon God or Christ again in heaven. At the end of the tribulation, John sees *an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. ² And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan,*

and bound him for a thousand years,³ and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him... (Rev 20:1-3a).

Then, following Satan's release after 1000 years he gathers the unbelievers in the Kingdom for one last attempt to dethrone Jesus as King. Failing terribly, *fire came down from heaven and consumed them,¹⁰ and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev 20:9-10).*

Back to Revelation 12:13, *when the dragon (Satan) saw that he had been thrown down to the earth* (during the tribulation), *he pursued the woman (Israel) who had given birth to the male child.* Particularly during the 2nd half of the tribulation, Satan viciously hunts down any and all Jewish people to destroy them (cf. Mat 24:15-22). *But the woman (Israel) was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time (Rev 12:14).* John pictures God's rescue of Israel as powerful and swift, swooping desperate Israel away from Satan and antichrist's destructive forces into safety. The specific means used by God for this rescue mission are speculation on our part, and we should be

careful not to read our understanding of *the two wings of the great eagle* into the context of Revelation.

Satan, realising his defeat, becomes *furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus...* (Rev 12:17). Writhing with fury, Satan turns his attention to hunting down any and all in the world who have responded to the evangelistic messages of the 144,000 Jewish men, the 2 witnesses, and the 3 fly angles. Anyone who is found to have obedient faith in Christ is now his target more than ever before.

By this time in the tribulation, antichrist will be demonically energised as we read in Revelation 13:2-4. *And to the beast (antichrist) ...the dragon (Satan) gave his power and his throne and great authority.* ³ *One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast (antichrist).* ⁴ *And they worshiped the dragon (Satan), for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"* The world is drunk with Satan's delusion of antichrist. Blindly following antichrist, the world worships Satan.

In his endeavour to appear to be divine, and attempting to at least appear as powerful as Jesus, Satan enables antichrist to play out a fake resurrection. Antichrist seems to receive *a mortal wound* (death), *but its mortal wound* (death) *was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast* (Rev 13:3). The unbelieving world is so victimized by Satan and his antichrist that *they worshiped the dragon* (Satan), *for he had given his authority to the beast* (antichrist), *and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"* (Rev 13:4). This fake death and resurrection of antichrist (Rev 13:12) successfully deceives the world into absolute and total idolatry of the worst kind. Thinking that antichrist is their saviour, and thinking that he is invincible, they happily surrender their souls to him.

John progresses in Revelation 13 to show the establishment of Satan's unholy trinity. *Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.* ¹² *It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed.* ¹³ *It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people,* ¹⁴ *and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived* (Rev 13:11-14).

This 2nd beast, who is also called the false prophet in Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10, has a lovely nature. He seems soft and comforting like a lamb to seduce the nations into submission to antichrist. He speaks like the dragon (Satan) and has all the authority of the antichrist (the 1st beast) but speaks in tender and comforting tones. This 2nd beast (false prophet) also does miraculous signs and wonders in the actual presence of antichrist.

Revelation 13:15, *and it (the 2nd beast) was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.*

The 2nd beast (false prophet) is permitted to somehow breath what appears to be life into the image of the 1st beast, allowing it to speak. With modern technology, it is possible that this image of the beast is a hologram. But it's more likely I think, to be a robotic android with artificial intelligence (AI). This would give antichrist instant access via satellite internet connectivity through the image to control global politics, global banking, global military, global police, global education, and global religion. Through wireless connection to the image of the beast, the 2nd beast (false prophet) will be able to order the death penalty on anyone worldwide who is found not to worship the image of the beast (antichrist). Further evidence that the image of the beast cannot be human or angelic, is that it is not cast into

the lake of fire. John explains that when Christ returns and conquers His enemies, *the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet... These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur* (Rev 19:20). But the image of the beast cannot be cast into the lake of fire because it is not a living being.

Now that the satanic trinity is established (Satan, antichrist, and the false prophet), the false prophet (2nd beast) *causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead,*¹⁷ *so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.*¹⁸ *This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666* (Rev 13:16-18).

Antichrist demands absolute loyalty which he thinks he can get by forcing people to receive his 666 identifying mark on their bodies. Without his mark, people will not be legally permitted to buy and sell anything. We don't know how this mark will be applied, except that it will be placed either *on the right hand or the forehead*. Many possibilities exist as to how he could do this; a tattoo, a laser burn, a tiny computer chip, we really don't know. He may well use a method we don't presently know of, but we do know that he will somehow impose his mark upon the unbelieving world.

While there is much present day speculation and fear associated with this mark, believers can rest assured that it does not exist now. God has ordained that antichrist's 666 mark will only be taken by non-Christians after the following have taken place:

- The rapture of the Church.
- Antichrist must reveal himself to be god and rise to absolute world power.
- Antichrist needs to have committed the *abomination of desolation*.
- The 144,000 Jewish evangelists must be dispatched.
- The 2 witnesses must be at work.
- The 3 mighty witnessing angels must be traveling the world calling people to worship God.
- The false prophet must be working publicly and imposing the death penalty for not worshipping antichrist.
- The image of the beast must be active also.

Revelation 14:14 opens a new stage in John's vision with the words, '*Then I looked, and behold.*' As John draws near to closing his 3rd Interlude, he looks forward to the 7 Bowl judgements culminating with the events of Christ's return in Revelation 19. Verses 14-20 continue to provide a graphic picture of coming judgement upon antichrist and the wicked world.

Revelation 14:14 reveals *"One like a son of man,"* majestically identifying Jesus Christ entering earth's atmosphere riding a white cloud in fulfillment of Daniel 7:13-14 (cf. Rev 1:7; Mat 24:30; 26:64). Christ returns *with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand*. He comes wearing a crown. In the Greek language this is the *stephanos* crown which is worn by a victor of war or athletics. This crown is the precious golden crown of ultimate triumph and victory over all who oppose Christ as Lord and King.

Christ returns holding *a sharp sickle in his hand*, showing that He comes on a mission to harvest. A *sickle* is a common tool used for cutting grain or grass stalks at ground level. It has a sharp, long, curved metal blade with a wooden handle, and is used in a sweeping action from side to side. Christ returns to earth victorious for the purpose of conquering his enemies by cutting them down just as a worker does to grain at harvest time.

John continues by using two agricultural metaphors. The first is the grain harvest (:14-16), which pictures the seven bowl judgments (Rev 16:1-14). Then the grape harvest (:17-20), which pictures the judgment of Armageddon (Rev 16:16; 19:19). Together, these 2 harvests portray the inescapable certainty of God's coming judgment.

John then introduces us to 3 additional angels in verses 15-18 who will play their part in assisting Christ in the harvest

judgements. These 3 angels bring the total number of angels in Revelation chapter 14 to 6 (:6, 8, 9).

Verse 15 sees the 4th angel coming out from the heavenly temple and calling loudly for Christ to swing His sickle and harvest the earth. Long ago, God the Father had appointed the authority of judgement to Christ (Jn 5:22, 27; Ac 10:42; 17:31). And this will be the time for that judgement to begin in full fury, starting with the grain harvest.

Verse 16 tells us that Christ *swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped*. This harvest is initiated in chapter 16:1, where *the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”* We shall consider this grain harvest in greater detail in the next lesson.

John then sees *another angel*, a 5th angel, which *came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle* (Rev 14:17), ready to reap a harvest of grapes from the earth. As we shall see, the grapes speak also of the world’s wicked people.

Following, was yet *another angel* who had *authority over the fire* (14:18). This 6th angel calls *with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle* (the 5th angel), *“Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe”* (14:18). Consequently verses 19-20 tell of what happens when the 5th angel *swung his sickle across*

the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

The grape harvest, like the grain harvest, reap from the earth the wicked who shall suffer *the wrath of God* in two stages. Those who somehow survive the grain harvest of the 7 bowls of God's wrath, are swept up in the final grape harvest at Armageddon (Rev 16:16; 19:19). Inspired by Satan and lead by antichrist, the remaining armies of the world will gather to do war against Jesus Christ and Israel. This final confrontation takes place in a valley north of Jerusalem. We shall consider Armageddon in more detail when we come to Revelation chapters 16 and 19.

7 Bowls of God's Wrath

We leave this lesson with John having completed Interlude # 3; he proceeds now to show us the next stage in Christ's Revelation.

Revelation 15:1, *then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.*

Revelation 16:1, *then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."*