

BOOK OF REVELATION: VISION TO STRENGTHEN THE SAINTS



Revelation 11:19-5:4

The Drama of History – Scene # 4

Oakland International Fellowship

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An Interlude of 7 signs

1. In the second half of Revelation, John provides deeper insight into the spiritual conflict all behind it as Christ triumphs over evil. Those who are in opposition to the Lamb and his people are introduced in greater detail in **11:19-15:4**: the dragon, the beast out of the sea, the beast out of the earth (alias a false prophet) and the whore Babylon (including those marked by the beast).
2. This section begins with the opening of the temple and a viewing of the ark of his covenant. This is the **3rd** heavenly manifestation of God in the elements of nature:
 - 1st** before the throne (4:5),
 - 2nd** in the opening of the 7th seal (8:5),
 - 3rd** in the sounding of the 7th trumpet (11:15,19), and
 - 4th** in the outpouring of the 7th bowl (16:18).

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Drama of History

1-7 Sights / Signs	Bible Reference	Clue	What did he see?	Interpretation Questions
# 1 Sight / Sign	11:19-12:17	“A great sign appeared ...” “And another sign” (12:1,2)	A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon and stars under her feet... a crown of 12 stars on her head A great red dragon with 7 heads, 10 horns and 7 crowns	What does the description represent? What is the relationship of the woman and the dragon?
# 2 Sight / Sign	13:1-10	“And I saw” (13:1)	A beast rising out of the sea	What does this beast represent?
# 3 Sight / Sign	13:11-18	“Then I saw” (13:11)	Another beast arose from the earth	What is the relationship between the two beasts? What is the number 666?
# 4 Sight / Sign	14:1-5	“Then I looked, and lo” (14:1)	The lamb and 144,000 followers	Who are the 144,000? What is the significance of the ‘new song’ that they sing?
# 5 Sight / Sign	14:6-13	“Then I saw” (14:6)	The 3 angels and their messages	What kind of judgment is spoken by the 3 angels? And what is the mark of the beast?
# 6 Sight / Sign	14:14-20	“Then I looked, and lo” (14:14)	The throne and angels sent forth	What is being reaped in each of the harvests? Who is the son of man spoken of here?
# 7 Sight / Sign	15:1-4	“Then I saw” (15:1) “And I saw” (15:2)	A preview of warning and the song of victory	What is significance of the song as it relates to the 7 bowls of wrath?



An Interlude of 7 signs

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- 1st Sign: The conflict of the dragon with the woman and her seed (12:1-17)
- 2nd Sign: Persecution by the beast from the sea (13:1-10)
- 3rd Sign: Persecution by the beast from the land (13:11-18)
- 4th Sign: The Lamb and the 144,000 standing on Mount Zion (14:1-5)
- 5th Sign: The proclamation of the Gospel and of judgment by three angels (14:6-13)
- 6th Sign: The Son of man's harvest of the earth (14:14-20)
- 7th Sign: The saints' victory over the sea beast and their victory song (15:1-4) – {G. K. Beale=15:2-4}

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1st Sign: The conflict of the dragon with the woman and her seed (12:1-17)

❖ The woman figure: “A great sign”

1. The woman is the covenant community of believers, O.T. & N.T. She bears a child to rule the nations = Jesus Christ. This sharply contrasts the woman who rides the beast (17:1-5)
2. The “*Crown of 12 stars*” signifies the 12 tribes of Israel, God’s covenant community, (as in Joseph’s dream). “*Sun and moon*” signify God’s salvation (1:16 ; 21:23 ; 22:5 ; Isa.60:19-20).

❖ Red dragon figure: Then “another sign”

1. “*Great dragon*” = Ancient Serpent (deceiver), the Devil (slanderer) or Satan (accuser) (12:9). His ambition is to “*lead the whole world astray*”. The dragon / beast comes from the sea, and is seen out in the desert. (like 4th beast in Dan. 7’s vision)
2. 7 Heads, 10 horns & 7 crowns indicate world dominion & oppressive power of ancient kingdoms (Egypt 11:8, Rome 17:9)
3. “*1/3 of the stars*” = dragon’s demonic ‘angels’ cast to earth (who war against the heavenly angels led by Michael 12:7-8)



1st Sign:

God's Salvation: An Everlasting Light

❖ “.... His face was like the sun shining in full strength.
(1:16)

❖ “And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk ...” (21:23)

❖ “And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.” (22:5)

❖ The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.

(Isa.60:19-20)



1st Sign: The conflict of the dragon with the woman and her seed (12:1-17)

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❖ God's protection

1. God's protection in the desert. (Israel's exodus, Elijah's 3½ years & Michael's on-going battle (Dan.10 &12).
2. Trampling "42 months" (11:2 13:5), believers protected "1260 days" (11:3 12:6,14), ("*a time times and a half of time*" = 3½ years) and allotted time for antichrist to persecute the saints and for the 2 witnesses to appear (11:3) - all symbolic of the same period.
3. The "*water like a river*" from the serpent's mouth signifies the evil attacks against the church. God's protection allows for persecution and adversity to train up His children.

❖ The beginning of the end:

1. The Devil's kingship is only temporary. Dragon / beast's "Time is short" (12:12) figuratively = N.T. church age, embraces the "little longer" (6:11), the "delay" of the angel standing on the sea and on the land (10:6-7) and covers the "short time" that Satan is set free (20:3).

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2nd Sign:

Two strands of interpretation (13:1-10)

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- ❖ Some see this as a pervasive evil spirit that continually manifests throughout history instigating false teaching and persecution to defeat the church, **while...**
- ❖ Others see this as a personified individual Antichrist-figure who is to come at the final stages of history, one that John's vision sets forth over against the personal Christ figure.

❖ Relationship between the Dragon and the Beast:

1. In Daniel 7, beasts are kingdoms and horns are kings. Both are found in Rev. **Dan.7:2-7** presents four individual beasts, but in Revelation they form a composite beast out of the sea.
2. 10 **Horns**, 7 **heads**, & 10 **crowns** symbolize universal influence of evil over earthly kings and kingdoms with the intent to use all religious, economic, political and social powers of the world to destroy the church; like the Roman Empire but not limited to a single entity or period of history

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2nd Sign:

Persecution by the beast from the sea (13:1-10)

❖ The beast imitates and rivals Jesus Christ in several ways:

Both are involved in conflict having to do with a sword,
Both have devotees with names written on their foreheads,
Both are pictured as having horns that represent a kingship,
Both are described as having had a marvelous healing,
Both are given a vested kind of authority over nations, ... and
Both receive worldwide worship.

1. “*Who is like the beast?*” and “*Who can make war against him?*” (13:4). The beast uses its “*power to make war with the saints*”, seeking to conquer them. In his letters John explicitly states that the “*antichrist is coming*” (1 Jn.2:18).

❖ This is both a present reality that is, and a future reality that is not yet, for “*even now many antichrists have come*”.

2. The dragon / beast is worshiped (13:8), speaks blasphemy (13:2,5,6) and is a ferocious creature having 7 heads but only 1 boasting mouth. The leopard’s body, feet like a bear and mouth like a lion draws upon Hosea’s prophecy (Hos.13:4-9).



3rd Sign:

Persecution by the beast from the land (13:11-18)

❖ A second beast comes forth out of the earth

This 2nd beast serves the 1st beast, representing false philosophies and false religions of the world. Both are associated with the Roman state but not identical to it. The 2nd beast leads people to worship and follow the 1st beast. Later, this 2nd beast is referred to as the "*false prophet*".

❖ Using the authority of the 1st beast

The 2nd beast shows great signs and wonders in order to deceive. This demonic strategy imitates Moses and Elijah who sought to call the people of God into true faith and teach the Israelites how to obey God's law.

❖ Deception perpetrated by the beast

This is both external to, and from within, the visible church. Recovery from the fatal wound impresses the inhabitants of the earth, and miraculous signs confirm his false teaching and seduce people.



3rd Sign:

Persecution by the beast from the land (13:11-18)

The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refuse to love the truth and be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

(Thess. 2:9-12).



3rd Sign:

Inhabitants of the earth receive the mark

❖ Mark on the forehead and hand connote human mind and actions (Deut.6:4-9) This controversial number 666 refers to the 1st beast (13:1-8) and has varied interpretations:

1. Hebraic / Greek numerical calculations of the names of world leaders that might align with 666 have been suggested. Take the Greek form of Nero's name using a transliteration into Hebrew becomes 666 (nun=50, resh=200, waw=6, nun=50, qoph=100, samech=60, resh=200).
(contested)
- (Problem: other methods and names can be configured to add up to 666 too, e.g. Hitler).
2. A chronological estimation of the duration of the beasts reign
3. Symbolic interpretations of the number relate to the Antichrist or antichristian dominion.

(Problem: both #2 and #3 use metaphorical language commonly found in the Apocalypse and this hinders any attempt to extract a literal computation of the number.)

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4th Sign: (14:1-5)

The Lamb and the 144,000 standing on Mount Zion

- ❖ **The Lamb and the 144,000** : Mount Zion = Jerusalem, a city symbolic of God's presence & people. Standing on mountain contrasts dragon standing on sand. Lamb's and the Father's name written on foreheads. 144,000 = 12 x 12 x 10 x 10 x 10, symbolic of the perfect / complete number of the saved.
- ❖ 144,000 sang a new song that only they could learn: The “*roar of rushing waters*”, “*voice like thunder*” & sound “*like that of harpists*” all tie this to the 24 elders and the great multitude, anticipating their praise (Rev.15 &19).
- ❖ 144,000 are faithful witnesses: Like Christ their master, “*No lie was found in their mouths*”, for all liars end up in the fiery lake of burning sulfur; known as the second death.
- ❖ 144,000, sealed in 7:2-3, are redeemed from the earth and offered as “*firstfruits*” (14:3). In N.T. both Christ and converts to the faith are the firstfruits (Ja.1:18 ; 1 Cor.15:20,23 ; Rom.8:23), like Israel out from Egyptian slavery: the firstfruits

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4th Sign: (14:1-5)

The Lamb and the 144,000 standing on Mount Zion

- ❖ “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. . . . resurrection of the dead. For in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.”

(1 Cor. 15:20,22b-23)

- ❖ For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. Any not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly as the adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

(Romans 8:22-23)

- ❖ “Of his own will he (the Father of lights) bought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”

(James 1:18)



5th Sign: The proclamation of the Gospel & of judgment by three angels (14:6-13)

- ❖ The 1st angel declares “*eternal gospel*” to every “nation, tribe, language, and people. It is also a warning of judgment, for the hour has come (Double effect of blessing & curse).
- ❖ The 2nd angel decrees that “*Babylon the Great*” has fallen. The nations are made to drink the maddening wine of her adulteries (parallel to Jeremiah’s prophecy Jer.25:15-31).
- ❖ The 3rd angel focuses upon those receiving the mark of the beast. They are those who “*worship the beast and his image*” and made to drink the wine of God's wrath, “*poured out in full strength*”. Torment supports eternal judgment, not annihilation (parallels the destruction of Edom, Isa.34:9-10).
- ❖ Focus shifts to believers, for them to patiently endure and obey God's commands. A voice from heaven utters the 2nd of 7 blessings. Those who “*die in the Lord*” will be blessed, as the Spirit calls them to vigilant watchfulness and spiritual discernment of evil.

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6th Sign:

The Son of man's harvest of the earth (14:14-20)

- ❖ Judgment shifts to a double harvest theme concerning *"One like a son of man"* (14:14), who is seated on a white cloud. Christ coming on clouds *"like a son of man"* to rule over the church (1:7,13ff), and then later comes in judgment to conquer (19:11ff) as redeemer and judge.
- ❖ A judicial function is in focus with the *"sharp sickle"* & possibly in the image of a *"crown of gold"*. Redemption is symbolized by *"harvest of the earth"*, and Judgment by the angel's command to harvest and gather in the ripe grapes that are thrown into *"the great winepress of God's wrath"*.
- ❖ Angel *"in charge of the fire"* before hurled a censor of fire down to the earth (8:5), now calls for grapes of wrath (14:18).
- ❖ Trampled in a *"winepress outside the city"* implies disgrace like what Christ Jesus suffered. The blood's depth *"horse's bridle"* & length, *"1600 stada"*, points to complete judgment. (184 ml, 300 km, or approx. length of Palestine)



7th Sign: The saints' victory over the sea beast and their victory song (15:1-4)

- ❖ Another “*great and amazing sign*” is revealed, depicted as 7 angels with the 7 last plagues. The the 7th seal contains and reveals the 7 trumpets, and the 7th trumpet contains and reveals the 7 bowls. (An interlocking function of [15:2-4](#) operates similar to the interlocking function of [8:3-5](#).) Thus, these 7 signs form an extended interlude between the sounding of the 7th trumpet and the pouring out of the 7 bowls of wrath.
- ❖ “*God’s wrath is completed*” (15:1). The divine purpose of God was revealed in small part by the seals (6:12-17) and then in greater measure by the trumpets (8:6-9:21), but now is to be “*finished*” by the outpoured bowls (15:1b,7-8 ; 16:17).
- ❖ A prophetic picture of the ultimate triumph and praise is offered to honor God. The “*sea of glass*” evokes an image of stillness, earlier forming a part of the heavenly throne of God. Sea mixed with fire (15:2) is a metaphor for God’s purification and judgment. Victorious over evil, the saints break out in glorious song.



Contrasts touched upon by the 7 signs

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- 1st contrast: the Lamb of God
--- the beast
- 2nd contrast: the woman clothed with the sun & moon
--- the woman who rides the scarlet beast
- 3rd contrast: name of the Lamb & Father on the forehead
--- the mark of the beast on forehead or hand
- 4th contrast: the worldly city of Babylon the Great, fallen
--- the holy city Jerusalem, descent from heaven
- 5th contrast: the great throne of God
--- the abyss / the pit
- 6th contrast: the harvest of the earth (likely believers)
--- the harvest of ripe grapes in the winepress of God's wrath (unbelievers)
- 7th contrast: Triune God: God / Lamb / Spirit
--- Trinity of evil: dragon / beast / false prophet

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