

Outline of a New Chronological Time Course of the Book of Revelation

Hartmut Ising

Introduction

What did the early Christians hope for? The Apostle Paul says of the Christians in Thessalonica that they awaited God's Son from heaven... *Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come*. When that hope was dimmed by the deaths of some believers, Paul comforted them by declaring that at the coming of the Lord the dead will be raised first, and then they will be caught up in the rapture along with the transformed living. In his second letter he refutes the claim that the day of God's wrath has already begun. The proponents of this opinion had claimed that the doctrine of the rapture before the coming wrath must be wrong since the day of God's wrath had already begun.

In the year 325 the hope of the first Christians was buried under the consequences of Replacement theology. This teaching had the result that there is no glimmer of hope in the Nicene Creed. Today's creed ends with the words: I believe in... the resurrection of the dead and eternal life, Amen.

The expectation of the Son of God from heaven before the future wrath remained largely buried. Nevertheless, individuals lived in this joyful hope, which e.g. Rube (1665-1746) expresses in his song "The Lord is coming at midnight" with the words: "Look daily at His coming as if it were today".

At the time of the Reformation, both Catholics and Protestants believed that the time of God's judgment before the appearance of Christ had already begun. They insulted each other as "antichrist" or "false prophet". It was not until the 19th century that John Nelson Darby and his friends rediscovered the hope of the rapture before *the wrath to come*. When the believers understood that God's promises to Israel should not be misinterpreted as referring to the church, they began to study the future prophecy anew. In doing so, they began to distinguish between Israel and the Church in the prophetic texts of the New Testament. This work has not yet been completed to this day.

In attempts to interpret the book of Revelation, various groups have adapted the timing of Revelation to their preconceived time course. To this end, the chronology of the book was arbitrarily altered. Some used temporal folding, others interpreted sections which didn't fit their preconceived time course as parentheses. In this situation, David Gooding elaborated a six-part scheme of Revelation, considering only the thought flow and not the time course. I have used his scheme as a basis for elaborating a new time course of Revelation.

In the following, a new time course of the book of Revelation is introduced. This time course is largely chronological. This study is necessary since there is a controversy among biblical expositors, especially when the timing of the 70th week of Israel in Daniel 9:27 is compared to the time course of Revelation.

According to J.N. Darby, W. Scott, W. Ouweneel et al. the book of Revelation only contains the second half of the 70th week of Israel. Therefore, they assume that the two witnesses (Rev.11,3) have authority simultaneously with the beast (Rev.13,5). In contrast to this, other well-known Bible scholars see the time of the two witnesses in the first half of Israel's 70th week, as shown in Fig.1. We will now compare the reasoning of J.N. Darby with texts from Daniel and Revelation.

J.N. Darby writes (Apocalypse, Outline, Revelation 11:2):

"The holy city is trodden under foot of the Gentiles forty-two months. This is the second half of the last of the seventy weeks of Daniel. We only find the last half of the week spoken of in Revelation. The

whole week is spoken of in Daniel 9:24-27. First, you have seven weeks – these were historical; then sixty-two weeks are added, bringing us "unto Messiah the Prince." "After these things [it does not say how long] Messiah is cut off." The first half of the remaining week we find is the ministry of Christ which lasted three years and a half. Then the Messiah is cut off. So now to faith there is only the last half of the week to come. But the apostate nation, not owning the period of Christ's ministry, "confirms the covenant" with Antichrist for the whole week. They go on flourishing till the middle of the week."

1260 Days Power of 2 Witnesses 2 nd Woe (11,1-14)	Death of 2 Witnesses	42 Months Power of 2 Beasts (13,5) 3 rd Woe (11,15 & 15,1 & 16,1-21)
70 th Week of Years of Israel		
First Half: With Sacrifices in Jerusalem	Middle	Second Half: Without Sacrifices; Jacob's Trouble

Fig. 1 Time course of Revelation 11-16 in comparison to the 70th week of years of Israel according to A. Fruchtenbaum, C. Ryrie, and J. Allen "What the Bible teaches", Revelation.

According to Darby's interpretation, only the second half of Israel's 70th week is mentioned in the book of Revelation. However, the analysis of the time periods as shown below in Fig.2 leads to the result that this assumption cannot be correct. However, compared to the most valuable rediscovery of hope for the rapture of the church before the day of God's judgment on earth, this is rather insignificant. This hope is corresponds to the expectations of the first Christians (1Thes.1,10 and 5,9 and Rm.5,9 – see also my article: "The rapture of the church before God's wrath on earth").

Outline of the Book of Revelation

Introduction – „I am Alpha and Omega" (1,1-8)

Things, which thou hast seen: **Past**, Jesus Christ, judge of the churches (1,9-19)

Things, which are: **Presence**, His sentence on the seven churches, (2,1-3,22)

Things, which shall be hereafter: **Future** – from John's point of view, (4,1-22,5)

End – "Behold, I come quickly" – "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come".

The future part of the Revelation contains 7 seals, 7 trumpets, and 7 bowls of wrath, which can be represented schematically as follows:

1st-6th seal

7th seal => 1st – 6th Trumpet (5th/6th Trumpet = 1st/2nd Woe)

7th Trumpet = 3rd Woe = 1st-7th Bowl of Wrath

Beginning of God's judgment on earth

Many Bible interpreters believe that the direct judgment of God in the book of Revelation begins with the opening of the seven seals. However, some statements in Revelation speak against this interpretation.

As part of the 5th seal, the martyrs under the burnt altar in heaven (Rev. 6:10) ask: *How long, O Lord, you saint and truthful, do you not judge and avenge our blood on those who live on earth?* If the judgment had already started, this question would be meaningless. Rev.8,3-5 describes how the prayers of the Saints trigger God's judgment.

In Rev.7,3 the angels who are to carry out the judgments of God receive the command: *Do not harm the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees until we have sealed the servants*

of our God on their foreheads! So, before the sealing of the 144,000 chosen from the 12 tribes of Israel is finished, the judgment of God on earth cannot begin.

It is clear from these quotations that the judgment of God begins later. Then, what is the meaning of the opening of the seven seals? The opening of seals 1-6 is the preparation for the subsequent opening of the scroll (cf. "beginning of birth pangs", Mt.24,8) since it only can be opened when the 7th seal is opened.

The sealed scroll indicates the earth as the rightful possession of the lamb. The act of taking the earth into possession begins with the direct judgment of the Lord, i.e. with the day of God's wrath. This judgment day begins with the trumpet judgments.

Seals:	Before the onset of the Wrath of God (Mt.24,4-8; Rev.6,1)
Trumpets:	Beginning of the Wrath of God (Rev.8,7)
Bowls of Wrath:	Completion of the Wrath of God (Off.15,1)

According to a widely accepted interpretation, the rapture of the church takes place between chapters 3 and 4 of the book of Revelation. Rev.1,19 is taken as a reason: *Write what you saw and what is and what shall be hereafter*, whereby the word "hereafter" is interpreted: "after the end of church history – i.e. after the rapture of the church".

However, the words in Rev.1,19 can also be understood differently:

What you saw,	Past: The appearance of the glorified Son of Man.
What is,	Present: The current state of the seven churches at the times of John.
What shall happen hereafter,	Future: Seen from the perspective of John (around AD 100).

None of the original readers could think of a future that only begins after the time of the church has ended. This thought only came about by looking backward at church history comparing this with the seven letters.

The hidden connection to church history gives us an idea of the depth of God's thoughts in his word. However, we should differentiate between the deeper meaning of the text and its basic meaning. The events in chapters 4-7 were in the future for John and the seven churches – but for us in the year 2020 some of the events could be in the past.

When weighing up these two interpretations we should consider what we are told in Dan.12,4: *But you, Daniel, close these words and seal the book until the end! Many will research it and the knowledge will increase.* We are much closer to the time of the end than Darby. I would like to ask my readers to examine impartially the biblical arguments which I want to present in this article. However, this is much easier said than done. Our perception is largely determined by our thinking habits. An example for this is the lack of understanding among our Lord's disciples regarding His announcements of suffering and resurrection. Our Lord said to the Emmaus disciples (Lk.24, 25): *O you incomprehensible, how slow your heart is to believe in everything the prophets have spoken!*

Comparison of different time courses

David Gooding studied the structure of the book of Revelation and especially the thought flow. (David Gooding, *The Revelation and the Tabernacle*: © The Myrtlefield Trust, 2018). After studying David Gooding's structure, I discarded my previous one and now use this structure as basis to develop a new time course of the book of Revelation.

The Structure of the Book of the Revelation

1. 1:1–3:22	2. 4:1–7:17	3. 8:1–11:18	4. 11:19–15:4	5. 15:5–19:10	6. 19:11–22:21
1. Statement of contents . . . the testimony of Jesus (1:1–3)	Opened: Door in heaven	Opened: Seventh seal: Silence in heaven for half an hour	Opened: Temple of God in heaven	Opened: Temple of tabernacle of testimony in heaven	Opened: Heaven
2. John’s greeting: grace and peace from the Trinity (1:4–8)	THE THRONE and THE TWENTY-FOUR THRONES	BIG ALTAR and GOLDEN ALTAR OF INCENSE: SMOKE FROM THE INCENSE	ARK OF GOD’S COVENANT	TEMPLE FILLED WITH SMOKE FROM GOD’S GLORY AND POWER	
A. THE SON OF MAN	Pervading theme: – The throne of God	Pervading theme: – Timing	Pervading theme: – Power and authority	Pervading theme: – Beauty and clothing	A. THE WARRIOR KING AND JUDGE
– A sharp sword coming out of his mouth – Coming to address the SEVEN CHURCHES (1:9–20)	Ch. 4: throughout Ch. 5: throughout 6:16 7: 9–11, 15, 17	8:1 9:5, 10, 15 10:6 11:2, 8–9, 11, 18	Ch. 12: Satan’s struggle for power: the man-child and God’s throne Ch. 13: the throne of the beast Ch. 13; 14:7, 9; 15:2: the beast’s blasphemous claim to divine honours and worship	15:6 of the seven angels 16:15: garments/naked 17:4: of the Harlot 18:12, 16: of Babylon 19:7–8: of the Bride of the Lamb	– A sharp sword coming out of his mouth – Coming to deal with the KINGS OF THE EARTH, THE BEAST, THE FALSE PROPHET AND SATAN (19:11–20:10)
B. THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES (2:1–3:22)	Other Tabernacle references: 6:1–7: living creatures 6:9: altar 7:11: living creatures 7:15: tent Comment: (7:13–17) – by one of the elders	Other Tabernacle references: 9:13: golden altar 11:1, 4: temple, court, altar, lampstands Comment: (11:16–18) – by the twenty-four elders	Other Tabernacle references: 13:6: tabernacle of God 14:18: altar of sacrifice 15:2: the sea of glass Song: (15:2–4) – by the victors over the beast	Other Tabernacle references: 15:7: living creatures 16:7: altar of sacrifice Response: (19:1–10) – by the great multitude	B. NEW JERUSALEM – TABERNACLE OF GOD WITH MEN – BRIDE OF THE LAMB (20:11–22:15) 1. Threefold testifying of Jesus (22:16–20) 2. The grace (22:21)

David Gooding © The Myrtlefield Trust

David Gooding excluded in his study the problem of a time course. However, in a private discussion, he explained to me that the main problem with the current time courses is the missing reference point which clearly defines the same event in OT and NT prophecy. Therefore, he suggested to construct a new time course of Revelation starting with the well-defined point of time of the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and the judgment of the two Beasts in Rev.19 resp. the Little Horn in Daniel 7 (see Fig.2). For this purpose, we will study the durations which are given in Revelation and compare them with the OT prophecy and the six sections of the book of Revelation as given in David Gooding’s table.

Durations in the Book of Revelation

The first duration is given in Revelation 8,1: *There was a silence in heaven for about half an hour.* After this extraordinary silence, God’s judgment on this earth will start with the sound of the first four trumpets. The trumpets 5 to 7 are identical to the three woes, which are listed below. The duration of the 5th to 7th trumpet mentioned in the book of Revelation are shown in Fig. 2. The end of the judgments in Revelation together with the appearance of the Messiah are the point of reference to the Old Testament prophecies.

5th Trumpet = First Woe: Five months of agony

- Rev.9,1 *And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.*
- Rev.9,5 *they should be tormented five months*
- Rev.9,12 *One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more after these.*

Time Periods in Daniel and in Revelation

<p>(9:1) 5th Trumpet = 1st Woe (9:12) Men tormented for 5 months (9:5)</p>	<p>(9:13) 6th Trumpet = 2nd Woe (11:14) Holy city trodden down for 42 months (11:2) 2 Witnesses have power for 1260 days (11:3)</p>	<p>(11:15) 7th Trumpet = 3rd Woe Haven for the woman after giving birth for 3 ½ years (12:6 & 14) 2 Beasts have power for 42 months</p>	<p style="color: red;">Arrival of Messiah, King of Kings (19:11-21)</p>
<p>Last 7 years of Israel (Dan.9:24)</p>			<p style="color: red;">Reference point</p>
	<p>1st half with sacrifices (Dan.9:27)</p>	<p>2nd half without sacrifices, most intensive tribulation (Dan.12:1)</p>	<p style="color: red;">Arrival of Messiah (Dan.12:17 & Mt.24:15)</p>

Fig.2 Duration of the three Woes in Revelation and the 70th week of Daniel

When referring to Israel, the duration is given in days (sun, day),
when referring to the nations and/or the beasts in months (moon, night).

6th Trumpet = Second Woe: 3 ½ years, torments triggered by the two witnesses and war

- Rev.9,13-14 *And **the sixth angel sounded**, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, Saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, Loose the four angels who are bound in the great river Euphrates.*
- Rev.11,1-2 *And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. 2 But the court which is outside the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.*
- Rev.11,3 *And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and three score days, clothed in sackcloth.*
- Rev.11,6-8 *These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.*
- Rev.11,12-13 *And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up here. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the rest were frightened, and gave glory to the God of heaven.*

Rv.11,14 ***The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe comes quickly.***

7th Trumpet = Third Woe: 3 ½ years refuge for the faithful remnant of Israel during the most intensive tribulation by the beast from the sea

Rev.11,15 *And **the seventh angel sounded**; and there were great voices in heaven.*

Rev.12,1 *And there appeared a great sign in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.*

Rev.12,6 *And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three score days.*

Rev.13,1 *And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea.*

Rev.13,5 *And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.*

Rev.15,1 *And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having **the seven last plagues; for in them is completed the wrath of God.***

After the third Woe, Messiah returns as the Victor.

Rev.19,11 *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon it was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he does judge and make war.*

Rev.19,19-20 *And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that worked miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

The victory of the King of Kings in Revelation as compared to OT prophecy

Rev.19,11-21:	Victory and judgment of enemies
Dan.7,25-26:	Victory over the little horn after 3 ½ years of power
Dan. 9,27:	End of the last 7 years of Israel
Dan.12,1;11-12:	End of most intensive tribulation and coming of Messiah
Zech.14,3-5 & 9:	Coming of the LORD with his saints, victory and kingdom

The three woes follow one another without overlap and have a total duration of seven years and five months. During the second woe, the two witnesses have power for 3½ years. During this time, the sacrificial service takes place on the altar in Jerusalem (Rev.11,1-3). The third woe, lasting three and a half years, is the time of Jacob's tribulation (Jer.30.7; Dan.12.1). During this time, the sacrificial service in Jerusalem is interrupted (Dan 9:27). The total duration of the second and third woes are seven years and, according to Dan 9.27, represents the last week of years of Israel before the Messiah's arrival.

We thus conclude that the view shown in Fig.1 corresponds to the prophetic writings in the OT and in the Revelation.

The time course of the trumpet judgments and bowl judgments in the book of Revelation together with the last seven years of Israel before the return of the Messiah and the

beginning of the Messianic Kingdom of peace is shown in Fig.3. The six parts correspond to the division proposed by David Gooding.

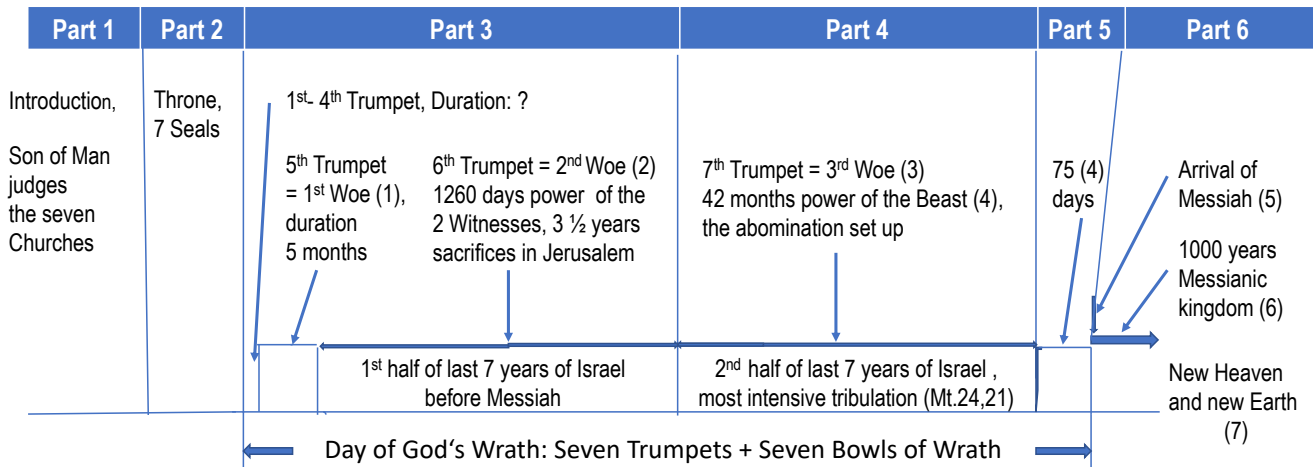


Fig.3 The six parts of the book of Revelation together with Israel’s 70th week of years and the day of God’s wrath

References: (1) Rev.9,1+5+12; (2) Rev.9,13; 11,3+7+14; Dan.9,27a; Rev.11,1-2 (3) Rev.11,15;13,5; 15,1; (4) The duration of the power of the beast is (42 months); according to Dan.12,11-12 Messiah will arrive 75 days after the End of the absolute power of the beast. (5) Dan.12,12; Zech.14,3-4; Rev.19,11-16; (6) Is.2,4; Rev.20,2-4; (7) Is.65,17; Rev.21,1.

The six parts of the book of Revelation

Following the above quoted outline of Revelation by David Gooding, the book can be divided in six parts. The divisions begin with five openings in heaven.

Part 1: After the introduction the Son of Man is described with a sharp sword coming out of his mouth (1,9-20). The letters to the seven churches can be understood as the sentences of the divine judge (2,1-3,22). It is important to note the similarity of this 1st part to the 6th part.

<u>Symmetry of part 1 and part 6</u>	
# Jesus Christ as a judge: a sharp, double-edged sword emerged from his mouth (Rev.1,16 / 19,15)	
Part 1: Judgement on the 7 churches; Blessing for overcomers	Part 6: Judgement on the Nations Death for the enemies of God
# Jesus Christ introduces himself in both parts: <i>I am the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end</i> (Rev.1,8 / 21,6)	
# Jesus Christ and his saints	
He walks among the 7 churches on earth	He will live with them in the heavenly Jerusalem
# His promise:	
<i>See, he comes with the clouds</i> (1.7)	<i>I'm coming soon! Amen</i> (22.20)

Part 2 begins with the 1st opening in heaven: Rev.4,1 *After that I looked and see, a door was opened in heaven.* The throne of God is mentioned 25 times in this part. John is caught up to heaven in spirit and is allowed to look into the throne room through an open door. The throne, the main theme of this part, is mentioned 12 times in chapter 4, 5 times in chapter 5, once in chapter 6 and 7 times in chapter 7. In the following 15 chapters of Revelation, God's throne is mentioned only 6 times. Since the throne of God is the main theme of this section until the end of chapter 7, it is, therefore, clear that chapter 7 is not an insert.

Chapter 4 deals with the rule of God. The throne is surrounded in the vertical plane by a rainbow - the sign of God's covenant with Noah, in which God has delegated jurisdiction to man. The 24 thrones of the elders surround God's throne in the horizontal plane and indicate the indirect government of God by the elders. This covenant ends with the beginning of God's judgment, the day of God's wrath on earth. In chapter 5, Jesus Christ appears both as the victor and the victim. He alone is worthy to open the sealed scroll. Opening the first six seals in Chap. 6 is the preparation for opening the scroll. God's Judgment Day begins with the opening of the 7th seal and with the scroll.

Before God's judgment begins on earth, chapter 7 shows God's care for his own: First, the sealing of the 144,000 from Israel who are protected by this seal in God's judgment - just like Noah in the ark. In my opinion, the innumerable crowd before God's throne is the church that was taken to heaven at an undefined time before the beginning of the judgments - just like Enoch before the flood. The innumerable crowd comes from the same tribulation that Johannes also participated in (Rev.1,9). With this view, the chronology of Revelation is preserved, and chapter 7 is a consolation for both of the above groups. John describes himself as a "companion in the tribulation" (Rev.1,9). Here and in Rev.7,14 a certain tribulation is indicated by the definite article. In Rev 7.14 the tribulation, defined by the definite article, is given the addition "the great one". In my understanding, this addition describes the tribulation of the entire time of the church from Pentecost to the Rapture. The definite article is missing in Mt.24,21 and Dan.12,1. This tribulation is defined by the following addition: *How it has not been and will not be since the beginning of the world.* This can be briefly expressed as "the most intense tribulation ever".

The tribulation, the Great (Rev. 7.14 literal translation of the Greek) is to be distinguished from the tribulation of Jacob, which is the most intense tribulation ever (Mt.24.21 & Dan.12.1). This tribulation of Israel begins with the interruption of the sacrificial service in Jerusalem and the establishment of the abomination of devastation (Dan 9:27).

Part 3 describes the opening of the scroll, which only takes place after the opening of the 7th seal: Rev.8,1 *And when it opened the seventh seal, there was a silence in heaven, for about half an hour.* The day of God's judgment begins with the sound of the trumpets. The duration of the first four trumpets is not specified. I suspect that they will cause the described devastation on Earth in rapid succession, presumably as asteroid or comet impacts.

The 5th trumpet is identical to the 1st woe and has a duration of five months. At this time, powers from the abyss are tormenting those on earth who are not protected by the seal of God. During the 6th trumpet, which is identical to the 2nd woe, the two witnesses have power for 1260 days. This period is the first half of Israel's last Week of Years. During this time, God is worshipped in the temple in Jerusalem through sacrificial service (see my article: *The Future of the Temple in Jerusalem*). After the end of the second woe – the death, resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses – the 7th trumpet sounds. In part 2 the four living beings said: *God Almighty, who was and who is and who is coming!* (Rev.4,8). This part ends with a praise from the 24 elders, in which they say: *We give thee thanks, Lord God*

Almighty, [He] who is, and who was, that **thou hast taken thy great power and hast reigned** (Rev.11, 17, Darby-Translation).

The six parts and the five openings in heaven are adapted from David Gooding.

Part 1 (1,1-3,22)	Part 2 (4,1-7,17)	Part 3 (8,1-11,18)	Part 4 (11,19-15,4)	Part 5 (15,5-19,10)	Part 6 (19,11- 22,21)
Introduction; <u>Son of Man:</u> <i>A sharp sword out of his mouth</i> (Rev.1,16) Letters to the seven churches	<u>Openings in Heaven: Door Throne of God</u> Chap.4: 12 x Chap.5: 5 x Chap.6: 1 x Chap.7: 7 x 1st - 6th Seal	<u>7th seal / Scroll</u> ¹⁾ <u>Begin of God's judgement:</u> Trumpets 1 - 4; Trumpets 5 - 6 =Woe 1 - 2; Power of the two Witnesses 7th Seal 1.-6. Trumpet	<u>Temple</u> ²⁾ <u>Ark of covenant with Israel;</u> Refuge for Israel; Israel's most intensive tribulation (Mt.24,15 & 21); Power of the two Beasts 7th Trumpet	<u>Temple</u> ²⁾ <u>7 Angles</u> Wrath of God completed; Babylon judged; Wedding of the Lamb. 7 Bowls of Wrath	<u>Heaven</u> <u>Warrior, King and Judge: Sword out of his mouth</u> (Rev.19,15) New Jerusalem: Bride of the Lamb; New Heaven and new Earth
Prophetic über Israel					
	<u>Israel many days without prince and sacrifice</u> (Hos. 3,4)	<u>3 ½ years: 1st half of 70th week. With sacrifice</u> (Dan.9,27)	<u>3 ½ years: 2nd half of 70th week. Without sacrifice</u> (Dan.9,27)	<u>75 days before arrival of Messiah</u> (Dan.12,11-12)	<u>Arrival and Dominion of Messiah</u> 1(Dan.3-14) <u>New Haven and Earth</u> (Jes.66,17)

1) The scroll opens when the 7th seal is opened.

2) The two openings of the temple indicate that these two parts are partly parallel in time.

Fig. 4 New Chronological Time Course of the Book of Revelation

Part 4 is mostly about Israel. This part begins with the words: *And the temple of God in the heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen in his temple* (Rev. 11:19). A sign appears in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun and giving birth to a son in labor. This son is caught up to God (see my article: The Mystery of Glad Tidings in the Darkest Days). The devil is cast out of heaven: *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, who deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him* (Rev.12,9). On earth he pursues the woman who gave birth to the son. The woman – Israel – flees to the desert, where she is given a safe haven for 1260 days. The dragon empowers the beast to reign in terror. He kills the two witnesses and has power for 42 months.

The **5th part** is probably partly parallel to the 4th part. This is indicated by the repetition of the opening of the temple: *the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened* (Rev.15,5). This part contains the seven bowls of wrath in which God's wrath is completed (Rev.15,1). After two prophecies concerning the harlot Babylon, this part ends with the description of the wedding of the lamb.

The **6th and last part** begins with the opening of heaven: *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon it was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he does judge and make war* (Rev.19,1). It contains the second coming of Jesus Christ as King of Kings, judgment on the enemies of God, the first resurrection, the millennium of peace and the new heaven and earth. These six parts of the prophetic part of Revelation are shown in Fig.4 along with the corresponding Old Testament prophecies.

The believer's hope and our understanding of the book of Revelation

During the Reformation, most believers were convinced that God's judgment day had already begun. With this the hope of the rapture was lost (cf. 2Thes.2,1-2).

When Darby studied the prophetic scriptures in the early 19th century, he realized that the rapture is to be expected at any time. The first Christians had lived in this hope (1Thes.1,10). The interpretation that the rapture of the church takes place between chapters 3 and 4 of Revelation is in line with this biblical hope. But what about the new time course of Revelation presented here?

Since the church is raptured before God's judgment day, but the opening of the seals according to the new schedule is only the preparation of the judgment day, someone might think that the rapture can only take place after the seals were opened. Is this a danger for our hope? Where do we stand today in the time course of the book of Revelation? I am convinced that the opening of the 5th seal was completed with the terrible genocide of the Jews by Nazi Germany. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the martyrs, whose souls are shown under the burnt altar and who pray for God's revenge, are not part of the church.

In the 1970s, we were visited by some Jewish couples who had survived the Holocaust in Russia. They asked me why God allowed this terrible genocide. I read Rev. 6,9-11 to them and explained that the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God and for their testimony were Jewish martyrs. To their question (V.10), they received the answer (V.11) *that they should rest for a little while longer until their fellow servants and their brothers who, like them, should also be killed*. For Israel, the just judgment of God on this earth is a consolation, as can be seen from the continuation of the text that Jesus Christ read in the synagogue in Nazareth (Is.61,1-2): *The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn*.

Our Lord had read up to the words " *the acceptable year of the LORD* " and said (Lk.4,21): *Today this scripture is fulfilled before your ears!* The time period of grace was opened by our Lord. The faithful of the time of grace, like our Lord on the cross and like Stephen, ask for mercy and not for revenge. However, the day of vengeance is included in God's plan as a consolation for his covenant people Israel. This is obvious in Isaiah 61,2b: *and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn*.

As previously mentioned, I understand that the opening of the 5th seal was fulfilled with the Holocaust. What does the opening of the 6th seal mean? Rev.6,12-14 describes cosmic catastrophes similar to the first four trumpet judgments, which caused global destructions. The effects of the 6th seal, on the other hand, lead to panic and fear of the Day of Wrath (V.15-17): *And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the generals, and the mighty men, and every slave, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath has come; and who shall be able to stand?*

The fear described here is in my opinion based on the knowledge that a cosmic catastrophe is imminent. This catastrophe is likely the collision of an asteroid or comet with earth that was calculated several months before the collision. In the past time, dangerous orbits of such objects were observed several times, but the all-clear was given because the

orbits only passed close to the earth. If such a path is observed in the future and then an imminent collision with the earth is confirmed with certainty, this must lead to a acute fear, as described in Rev.6.15-17. If such a situation occurs before the rapture, believers would be given the opportunity for the first time to know with certainty the latest time of rapture, because before the Judgment Day of God begins (Rev.8,1-12) the church is raptured and stands before the throne of God. In contrast to the people on earth who want to hide from the ruler on the throne, the raptured believers praise their God and receive the most wonderful consolation for their tears, which they cried in the great tribulation: *For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes* (Rev.7,17).

So, we live in a time when we should expect the rapture very soon since the beginning of the divine judgment very near. Our understanding of the time course of Revelation shows us how much of the prophecy has already come true. The difference to the interpretation that the rapture takes place before the opening of the seals consists primarily in the fact that the new time course shows us today how small the time window before the rapture has become.

May God grant us that our joy and hope of the Lord's returning to take us to our Father's house will be refreshed in our hearts through this new study of the book of the Revelation. In the introduction to this great book we are encouraged to this study: *Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.* To conclude our reflections, I would like to quote our Lord's promise and the answer of His church: *He who testifies these things says, Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

(2023-01)