

# The Structure of The Apocalypse

A Study in How Literary Connections Can Help  
Inform Our Exegesis of Revelation

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## The Major Sections of Revelation

### What Are The Major Divisions of the Apocalypse?

R.J. Loenertz: Organized around 7 major sections.

J.M. Ford: Composed of 6 series of 6.

K.A. Strand: Comprised of 8 basic visions.

J.P. Charlier: Composed of 5 septenary patterns.

### Straight forward proposal: Revelation 1:19

- |                            |          |            |
|----------------------------|----------|------------|
| 1. Things that were        | 1:9-20   |            |
| 2. Things that are         | 2:1-3:22 |            |
| 3. Things that are to come | 4:1-22:5 | (Futurist) |

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## Use The Author's Scheme!

“ Many commentators cannot resist numbering one or two other sequences of seven which John apparently overlooked. Before one proceeds to help John in this way, the critic ought to ask why John chose not to number them. Then the critic ought to try to come to terms with John's own organization. We must read his work...” (David L. Barr, *The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation of the World: A literary Analysis*,” Int 38 no,1 [January 1984]: 43).

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## Chronological or Recapitulation?

← 7 Year Tribulation →

### 1. Chronological:

Seals 1-7 → Trumpets 1-7 → Bowls 1-7

### 2. Recapitulation:

→ Seals →  
→ Trumpets →  
→ Bowls →

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## The Structure Built On Daniel 2

Daniel 2:28 But, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what must take place in the last days... (α δει γενεσθαι)

### Seams In Revelation

Rev 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bondservants the things which must soon take place...

Rev 4:1 ...come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things...

Rev 22:6 ... and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place.

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## Storm Theophany Structure

Rev 4:5 Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder...

**7<sup>th</sup> Seal** Rev 8:5 Then the angel took the censer...and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

**7<sup>th</sup> Trumpet** Rev 11:19...and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

**7<sup>th</sup> Bowl** Rev 16:18 And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came upon the earth...

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### Progression of Rev 6-22

**Seals 1-6** Revelation 6 "The beginning of birth pangs"

Interlude Revelation 7 "The 144,000 and the martyrs"

Rev 6:17 "for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

**7<sup>th</sup> Seal (Trumpets)** Revelation 8:1-6 "Throne Room"

**Trumpets 1-6** Revelation 8:7-9 "Cosmic Upheaval"

Interlude Revelation 10-11:14 "Little Book/2 Witnesses"

**7<sup>th</sup> Trumpet (Bowls)** Revelation 11:15-19 "Throne Room"

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### Progression of Rev 6-22

Interlude Revelation 12-14 "Israel, 2 Beasts, 144,000"

**Bowls 1-6** Revelation 15-16:16 "Exodus/Armageddon"

**7<sup>th</sup> Bowl** Revelation 16:17-21 "Throne Room"

1. Rev 16:17-19:10 "The Fall of Babylon"

2. Rev 19:11-20:15 "Final battles and judgments"

3. Rev 21-22:5 "New Creation and New Jerusalem"

1. **Evidence For An Extended 7<sup>th</sup> Bowl**  
Rev 16:17 "It is done" 2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away ...  
Rev 21:6 "they are done" (γίνομαι)

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### Evidence For An Extended 7<sup>th</sup> Bowl

2. **One of the seven angels**

Rev 16:17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl...

Rev 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came...

Rev 21:9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke...

3. **Armageddon**

6<sup>th</sup> Bowl (Rev 16:12-16) only prepares for the battle!

The culmination of the battle does not occur until Rev 19:17-21.

The assignment of the beast to the lake of fire 19:20

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## Evidence For An Extended 7<sup>th</sup> Bowl

### 4. The Finality of the 7 Bowls

Rev 15:1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

Rev 20:10 – Satan thrown into lake of fire

Rev 20:15 – Unbelievers thrown into lake of fire

### 5. The Introductory Announcement of 7<sup>th</sup> Bowl

Rev 16:20 ...every island fled away...mountains were not found

Rev 20:11... from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and a place was not found for them.

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## Evidence For An Extended 7<sup>th</sup> Bowl

### 6. Parallel/Contrast Babylon and New Jerusalem

Rev 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the **great harlot** who sits on many waters."

Rev 21:9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you **the bride**, the wife of the Lamb."

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## Evidence For An Extended 7<sup>th</sup> Bowl

Rev 17:3 And he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.

Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God...

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## The Timing of God's Wrath

**5<sup>th</sup> Seal** Rev 6:9-11 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "**How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?**" And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the number* of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

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Rev 6:11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the number* of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.  
"God's wrath upon the world has not begun at this time, as the martyrs are asking "how long" until the sovereign Lord deals out retribution. The divine response is that once the last martyr gives his life, the Lord will begin His systematic fiery wrath..."(Habbená, Fig Tree, 65-66).

Rev 10:6-7 (angel) and swore by Him who lives forever and ever...that there will be delay no longer, but in the days of the voice of the 7<sup>th</sup> angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished.

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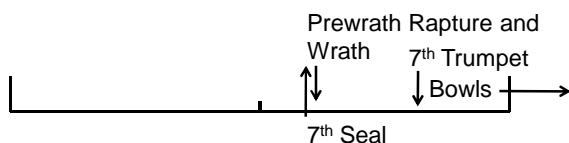
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## The 7 Bowls Complete God's Wrath

Rev 6:11 ετι χρονον μικρον, εως πληρωθωσιν και συνδουλοι αυτων και οι αδελφοι αυτων ...  
"yet a little time" (delay)

Rev 10:6 ...οτι χρονος ουκετι εσται.  
"there will no longer be time" (delay)



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## Wrath Begins At Beginning of 70<sup>th</sup> Week

6<sup>th</sup> Seal Rev 6:12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair...

Matt 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky...

Rev 6:15-17 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves among the rocks and mountains and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

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## Wrath Begins At Beginning of 70<sup>th</sup> Week

Rev 6:17 "their wrath has come"

ἦλθεν (aorist, active, indicative)

"In the indicative mood, the aorist usually denotes past time"  
Heiser, Michael S.: *Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology*. Logos Bible Software, 2005; 2005, aorist

"In the indicative, the aorist usually indicates past time with reference to the time of speaking" (Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar, Beyond the Basics*, 555).

"The sixth seal cannot be anticipatory of the great day of wrath about to happen, because it would have the earthlings announcing the soon-arrival of something that will, as Scriptural teaching indicates, catch them by complete surprise (cf. 1<sup>st</sup> Thess 5:2; 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:10) (Thomas, Revelation, 459).

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## Wrath Begins At Beginning of 70<sup>th</sup> Week

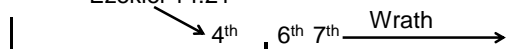
**Prewrath view: No wrath until 7<sup>th</sup> Seal**

6<sup>th</sup> Seal Rev 6:17 ...their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

δυναμαι (present, middle/passive, indicative)

"The rapid sequence of all these events could not escape public notice, but the light of their true explanation does not dawn upon human consciousness until the severe phenomena of the 6<sup>th</sup> seal arrive" (Thomas, Revelation, 458).

Ezekiel 14:21



Sword, famine, pestilence, wild beasts (Eze 5:13, 17)

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## Summary

1. Revelation is primarily chronological in its seals, trumpets, and bowls.
2. Revelation maintains interludes and areas of recapitulation in between the judgments in order to supply additional information.
3. Evidence suggests that the bowl judgments extend to the new creation. This fits with the understanding that the BDOL extends through the Millennium.
4. The cry of the martyrs at the 5<sup>th</sup> seal finds its ultimate answer in the judgment that comes in the 7 bowls (10:6).
5. Wrath begins at the beginning of the 70<sup>th</sup> week, not at the 7<sup>th</sup> seal.
6. The saints in Rev 7:14 are martyrs – not raptured saints.
7. The saints raised in Rev 20:4 are tribulation saints.

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