

Revelation 10 And The Church'S History

When Do the Seven Trumpets Sound?

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Jesus made it very clear, in both Matthew 24 and 25, that no man would be able to predict the day of His return. However, I think that it is also clear that the apostles had a keen interest in when He would return. This is only natural because His return means so much—both to the world and, especially, to those of us who are in the church and awaiting the resurrection of the dead.

One of the reasons that prophecy is given to us is so that we will have sufficient knowledge to be aware of the times that we live in. Jesus expects us to be alert to the times, so that we are **not** caught unawares and proclaiming—by our conduct and attitudes—that "our Lord delays His coming." So I believe that it is good that we speculate from time to time as to where we are. It is good to do this if we all understand that we are *speculating*.

Interpreting prophecy accurately is extremely difficult. And God's own Word tells us, "**Then** you will know." That is, after it has been fulfilled! But we do a great deal of predicting before. We like to think in advance, and there is nothing wrong with that, as long as we do not get too hung up on it. Especially if we begin to focus in on a specific date, that is very bad news.

Today we are going to take a look back at some areas of the book of Revelation. We are going to look back in time, a little bit—especially in order to understand chapter 10 and leading into chapter 11 of Revelation. I am going to do this because it might tell us a number of things about events that many of us have experienced in these thirty or so years (since about 1970). It might give us a firmer handle on where we are now.

Chapter 11 is interesting because of the Two Witnesses—their preaching, the miracles, their deaths, their resurrections. And then, followed by that massive earthquake that is going to occur, the climatic sounding of the seventh trumpet. Pretty dramatic stuff, I would have to say. But we rarely look into chapter 10 with much depth. It seems almost insignificant in terms of the events occurring, seemingly, before it—and after it as well, in chapter 11.

Several questions: Do the events of Revelation 10 immediately follow those of chapter 9? Do they precede the events of chapter 11? Is chapter 10 really an inset chapter that is standing alone, as far as the sequence of events in the book of Revelation is

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concerned? Is it possible that men have broken the chapters in the wrong place, and thus we get a somewhat distorted picture of both chapter 9 and chapter 11? What are the seven thunders in chapter 10? Is it possible that, if we had better understood chapter 10, we would better understand what is happening in the church today? Maybe even foreseen—and been better prepared for—what has happened, especially in the last fifteen years or so?

We are going back to the beginning of the book of Revelation. And then (considering the importance and the size of the book) we are going to take what will be a fairly rapid overview—so that we get a sense of the way things are moving in the book of Revelation. We are not going to go into a great deal of specifics regarding this, except maybe touch on a few things in chapter 10—so that we understand chapters 10 and 11 a little bit better. I think it is essential to see somewhat of the way in which the book of Revelation is organized, because that gives a great deal of insight into chapters 10 and 11.

We have to begin by understanding that Revelation is *a revelation*. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ. But the symbolism—combined with the way that it is written—makes it rather mysterious and difficult for us to understand. However, once these keys begin to be unlocked, it becomes somewhat easier to understand.

Revelation 1:1-3 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass. And He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. 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.

Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.

Jesus Christ is the Revealer. He wants those of us living near the Day of the Lord to be informed about the general sequence of events—and maybe as specifically as He is willing to reveal it. John recorded what he saw and what he heard. Then he was projected forward in time to the Day of the Lord, and he saw something that would be akin to a three-dimensional movie. Beginning in verse 10 and on to the end of the chapter, the Revelator is introduced. He is more specifically and graphically shown, so that there could be no doubt at all as to whom the Revelator is.

Before we leave this area, there are a couple of things about the word "shortly" that will help us to understand the rest of the book of Revelation. That is, there are two ways to look at this term "shortly." And I am not saying that either one is right or wrong. I think that, in one sense, they are both correct.

First, we can understand "shortly" in terms of the way that God understands time. Not the way we look at it, but the way that He looks at it. Two times the Bible says that *a day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day*. I want you to think about this, because the revelation was given to John near the end of the first century. We will just say roughly 95-100 A.D.

It is now the year 2000. Nineteen hundred years have passed; and "shortly"—the way God looks at it—we are not even out of the second *day* yet. So the way He looks at it, that is pretty quick. (The way we look at it, oh, it is agony; and we are so impatient.)

The second way that you can look at it is that "shortly" can be understood to mean that once they are triggered—bang! bang! bang!—they are going to happen one right after the other, in ever increasing speed. Herbert Armstrong use to say (and I heard him say it many times), "Once these things begin to happen, they are going to happen so fast that they'll make your head spin." Well, they probably will; but I hope I understand what is going on.

Now to Revelation 2 and 3. Again, we are not going to spend a great deal of time here; but it is necessary to go into this to some degree in order to continue to lay the foundation for the things that come later. Notice especially:

Revelation 2:7 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches [plural]. ...

Revelation 2:11 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches [plural]. ...

Revelation 2:17 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches [plural]. ...

Well, you get the point. All of these messages are to *all* of the churches. They are all plural. There are four more references like that, and they all say basically the same thing. What this means, then, in practical application, is that what He says to the Ephesian church is also for all the other churches. What He says to Smyrna is for the

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other churches as well. What He says for Philadelphia, or Laodicea, is for the other churches too.

Each message is for each of the other churches, and thus nobody escapes the judgment of what it is saying in those scriptures. The messages are written in a "if the shoe fits, wear it" manner. So regardless of which group one is in—if one sees a description of himself, he is to acknowledge it and repent. Take the admonition, and go on from there with his life.

There are some few people who say that there are not seven eras here, but only seven attitudes that were in seven specific congregations at the end of the first century. They also add that these will be present in God's church, whenever and wherever it is. I am not saying that all of that is wrong; but I do not think that it is complete—as we are going to see as we go along.

What we will see, as we go along, is that there are indications of **time progression** virtually everywhere that one looks in this book. Just to give you an example—looking at the entire book in a quick overview—does not the entire book move chronologically from the time that the prophecies were given, through the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord, Christ's return, and then on into the new heaven and the new earth? Of course, it does. Chronologically, time is moving in the book of Revelation—from the very beginning to the end.

I say this, again, to remind you that Revelation 2 and 3—the messages to the church—are caught up in this time progression that begins with the giving of the revelation and then carries all the way through to Christ's return and the new heaven and the new earth. We will see later that there are some shorter, and also some longer, progressions of time. In many chapters, we will see indications of time progression—even though they may not be clearly marked (which is what happens here in Revelation 2 and 3). They are not clearly marked there; but believe me, there is time progression there—as we are going to see.

There are three things here. There are (1) seven first-century congregations, (2) seven consecutive eras, and (3) seven end-time organizations typified by the seven first-century congregations. Again, this is a biblical pattern that God uses throughout His Word—from beginning to end. God puts things down, very frequently, in layers. Virtually everything that God creates has multiple uses and multiple applications. There are primary meanings, secondary meanings, and tertiary meanings from time to time. That is what we are dealing with here. We are dealing with something that is consecutive eras, seven first-century congregations, and seven end-time organizations (that are

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typified by the seven first-century congregations).

What we see in chapters 2 and 3 is an encapsulation of conditions that will be extant in God's church throughout the entire period that exists within the context of the book of Revelation. There will be individuals, or small groups, within each era that will exhibit as part of their personality these dominant attitudes. There will always be people who have lost their first love, or who are being severely persecuted—like the Smyrnans. Or that are spiritually dead—like Sardis. Or that are very loving in a brotherly way—the Philadelphians; and, of course, those who are Laodicean.

So the application here is dual, because the chapters also show the dominant attitudes existing at any given time. So in the Ephesian era, that attitude will dominate; but the other six attitudes will also be present. That is proven just by the fact that these are seven congregations in the first century. The Ephesian church overall had a different attitude than the Laodicean church; but the attitude of the Laodicean church existed at the time of the Ephesian church. So the Ephesian attitude will dominate in the first era of the church; but the other [six] attitudes will be there also, only to a lesser intensity or degree.

There is, though, a progression of time; and this is going to be reinforced as we move through the book. But before we move on, I want us to look at chapter 3 and verse 1.

Revelation 3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things saith He that has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and are dead."

I bring this up because it was during this time period that Herbert Armstrong was converted—leading to the Philadelphia era of the church. But Herbert Armstrong always contended that (though they were a part of the true church) the Church of God Seventh Day were very weak. They existed; but they lacked faith to a very great degree.

By contrast, Herbert Armstrong (in a *Time* magazine article that appeared in 1974) was said to have been **thundering** a message around the earth. This was during a period of time when trouble existed within the church; and I think we lost about 35,000 people and 35 ministers (or something along that line). But the *Time* magazine article said, in regard to Herbert Armstrong, that he was *thundering* a message around the earth. Though *Time* magazine meant that in a figurative way, it does imply a work that was being done with **strength** and with a great deal of **vigor**—because, as you know, *thunder* is capable of shaking an entire building.

By contrast to Sardis and Herbert Armstrong, Laodicea is described as materialistic and self-satisfied—so puffed up with vanity that they declare that they are no longer in need of anything spiritually. "I have need of nothing," they say. And when there is self-satisfaction and wealth besides, who needs God? We understand that God's evaluation of them was a great deal different. And they earned—for their self-satisfaction and pride—a very, very stern rebuke.

Things are so bad in the Laodicean portion of the church that Jesus Christ is pictured as on the outside and looking in. They have kicked Him out! That is how bad it is. And it looks as if He is trying to get on into the church, standing at the door. So it is no wonder that He is going to vomit them out. The self-satisfaction is so great that they are **blind** to their spiritual reality—that they are naked. They see themselves fully clothed; but God saw them as being naked.

He is still willing, though, to grant and to accept their repentance. What He wants from them is a wholehearted change of attitude; and then He will be their Savior and God once again. I go into this in a little bit of detail because Laodicea comes up later in this sermon.

Revelation 5:1-5 And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders said unto me, "Weep not. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."

So throughout chapter 4 and leading into chapter 5, John is giving us a spectacular and stunning vision of God's throne and the activities taking place there, in God's presence, within the framework of the book of Revelation. So a scroll is produced that is sealed with seven seals. They did not have very many books in those days, but books were available. But this was a scroll; and most long correspondence was written on scrolls, rather than in books.

A scroll was a long sheet of parchment, rolled like paper towels. As one read the message, the document had to be unrolled. The document was sealed with a heavy, sticky wax that was heated until it was a liquid. Then it was dropped upon the end of the

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document, thus sealing it—until the seal was broken. And usually the seal was impressed with some identifying mark before it hardened, to confirm the identity of the sender.

This scroll had seven seals binding it—indicating that the document was completely written, and whoever gave it was making very sure that this document was not opened except by those to whom it was written. Something was in there that the author did not want prying eyes to see.

Now regarding the seven seals—there are two possibilities. The first one would be that all seven seals were on the outside, at the end of the document. (One, two, three, four, five, six, seven.) The second possibility is that, as the writer began writing and rolling the document up, he proceeded a certain distance and then placed the seventh seal. Then he did the same thing again and then placed the sixth seal. He wrote some more, and then placed the fifth seal. He wrote some more, and likewise placed the fourth, and then the third, and then the second, and then the first seal.

Therefore, the first seal would be the first one broken; and it would unfold (or make available, or reveal) what was written between the first and the second seals. Then the second seal was broken, and it would reveal what was written between the second and the third seals. When the third seal was broken, it would reveal what was written between the third and the fourth until finally you get to the seventh seal.

Even though it does not say it, that implies ***progression of events*** as well as ***progression of time***. That is, both time and events are happening sequentially, at one and the same time. In other words, all of the events do *not* happen all at the same time. Something happens, and then there is a period of time. Then the second begins, and another period of time. The third begins, and a period of time. And so forth, until everything is revealed.

Revelation 6:1-2 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, "Come and see." And I saw, and behold a white horse. And He that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto Him. And He went forth conquering, and to conquer.

This begins the revelation of what is behind the seals. What I want you to see, in verse 1, is the association of thunder with *the spoken word*. This time, it was an angel. But I want you to go back with me to the book of Job, and chapter 37. We will see that this is

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a pretty common biblical image that is given. Especially, thunder is associated with the voice of God and, secondarily, with the voice of an angel.

Job 37:4-5 After it a voice roared. He thundered with the voice of His Excellency. And He will not stay them when His voice is heard. God thunders marvelously with His voice; great things does He, which we cannot comprehend.

Psalms 18:13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hailstones and coals of fire.

Psalms 29:2-3 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto His name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. The voice of the LORD is upon the waters. The God of glory thunders. The LORD is upon many waters.

That is enough examples. I just want you to hang on to this association—of *thunder* with the spoken word, especially *the voice of God*.

Revelation 6:3 And when He had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, "Come and see."

Revelation 6:5 And when He had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, "Come and see." And I beheld, and lo a black horse.

Again, I just want to touch on that because I want you to see the progression of events; and, therefore, also implying a movement (a progression) in time as well. The events do not begin simultaneously, but consecutively—one after the other. Feed this back into Revelation 2 and 3, showing that indeed there are indications all through the book of eras (Ephesus to Laodicea).

One of the things that I want to bring to your attention here is that the first seal was the white horse—indicating false religion. What this indicates to me is that once a seal is opened and an event begins (in this case, false religion), it does not go away. It remains.

This does not mean that through the period that is covered—from the first century up to the twentieth century—that it is always going to be of the same intensity. It will wax and wane. Throughout the history of the church, there will be times when the false religion

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will be very strong and persecuting. There will be other times when it will not be persecuting the church. So it will wax and wane—just like weather, or any other event.

But, again, progression of time is indicated as well. So the events will intensify, and they recede. They will intensify again, and they will recede again. Thus the time covered here is from just after Christ's resurrection. We are taking this all the way back to sometime shortly after 30-31 A.D. When did the persecution begin against the church, and false religion begin to show itself as an enemy of the church? It began very quickly—from the Judaizers. And, of course, it intensified when the great false "Christian" church came into being and impersonated the true church while persecuting it.

What this seal does is that it represents the events that will occur within the period of time of this prophecy. So we are going to jump all the way to chapter 8 now.

Revelation 8:1-2 And when He had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. [So the seventh seal is broken.] And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

Then they begin to blast on their trumpets, and the seven trumpet plagues begin. They also occur progressively, sequentially—showing again passage of time between each occurrence. In your mind's eye, you can jump ahead all the way to chapter 16—where we have the seven bowls of God's wrath poured out. Again, they are done sequentially (toward a completing event); but in chapter 16, they occur very rapidly. As far as we are able to tell, they all occur in one day.

In addition to these things, there are inset chapters within the book of Revelation. An inset chapter is a chapter that does not follow the time sequence of the book. In other words, it is a chapter that does not necessarily apply in time sequence to the chapter that appears before it or the chapter that appears after it. But what it will do is explain in more detail events that are necessary to more fully understand what is happening **within** the time sequences.

Usually the inset chapters are historical digressions to give greater clarity to the revelation of the seals, the trumpets, the bowls of God's wrath, and other things that are connected to those. For instance, in Revelation 6:12 the sixth seal is opened.

Revelation 6:12 And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of

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hair, and the moon became as blood.

So the sixth seal begins, but the seventh is not opened *until* Revelation 8:1. Chapter 7 is in-between. It is an inset. What is occurring in chapter 7, as an inset, is showing some details of what is happening between one event and another (and not necessarily the sixth seal). In this case, though, the digression is fairly close to being within the sequence of events; but it is still a digression.

Revelation 7:1-3 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

This chapter is fairly clearly understood by most of us. What we have just read there is that God is postponing the events from continuing. If He had not, then what takes place in chapter 7 could not have taken place. It would have been too hectic, too dangerous, and too violent for those things necessary to bring about what chapter 7 does. So God actually projects those people in chapter 7 as standing before His throne; but they are not literally there yet—as far as time sequence would allow. So these events in chapter 7 are at least somewhat out of sequence.

I just give this to you so that you will, at least, have a fundamental understanding of how an inset chapter works. It provides detailed information about things that are occurring within the progression of events. So chapter 8 begins to deal with the Day of the Lord, and events begin to occur rapidly—so that by the end of chapter 9 six trumpets have been sounded.

We have always tended to assume that the events of chapter 10 followed in direct sequence to the events of chapter 9. But I have to ask a question here. "Do they?" We also believed that chapter 11 was an inset chapter, along with chapters 12, 13, 14, 17, and 18. But do the inset chapters actually begin with chapter 11? The answer to that is "No"—as we are going to see.

Revelation 10:1-2 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as

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it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth.

We have already seen (in chapter 7) angels around God's throne, holding back the four winds. That is, holding back the events. And we have also seen angels in association with the blowing of trumpets. So it seems natural to assume that when another angel appears (as in Revelation 10:1) that the events of chapter 10 follow right in sequence after chapter 9.

Also we have the word "and" at the very beginning of Revelation 10, in verse 1. "And" is a conjunction, is it not? It seems to tie things together; and indeed it does—but perhaps not the things that we think that it ties together. "And" refers to the sequence of the visions, but not necessarily to the sequence of events.

Now we do know for sure that Revelation 11 does contain inset material. When could the Two Witnesses possibly testify? It can only be during the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. We will not go into proving all of that now. You will have to take my word for it, and prove it for yourself; but it could only be during the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. When you check back on the events beginning in chapter 6, then it could only be during the fifth and sixth seals. That would include the trumpet plagues of chapters 8 and 9.

The events of Revelation 11:1-15, occur most specifically during the time of the fifth and the sixth seals. So chapter 11 is out of sequence. It looks back on events that had begun sometime before. The Two Witnesses do not prophesy according to the arrangement of the chapters. Rather, they prophesy during the 1260 days of the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord (Revelation 11:3). But what do we do with chapter 10? We see seven thunders mentioned in verse 3.

Revelation 10:3 And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

What are the seven thunders? If we had understood the seven thunders better, we would perhaps better understand the state of the church right now. Have we not generally always assumed, or understood, that the Philadelphia era would finish its work and *then* the Tribulation would begin—and the Laodiceans would do their preaching during the Tribulation? Of course, [we thought that] we would all be Philadelphians, and

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we would all be in the place of safety—while the Laodiceans were out there being hacked to pieces and telling the rest of the world to repent.

I do not think that works! The seventh angel sounds in Revelation 11:15. And what Revelation 10 is telling us is when the preaching **of the seven churches** will be stopped. The Two Witnesses are not included in that statement that I just made. The preaching of the gospel will not end *until* the sounding of the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11:15. All the preaching will be done by the time the Two Witnesses are killed. So the church is going to preach up until the Two Witnesses begin, and the Two Witnesses will begin and preach for three and a half years. And then the preaching of the gospel to the world will be done.

Now let us quickly look ahead to chapter 12. Here we have one of the clearest pictures of an inset chapter.

Revelation 12:1-2 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

What we have here is an encapsulated history of the true church. It begins by showing a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun. That is the church. And so we see the origin of the church is in heaven. This is much more condensed than what appears in Revelation 2 and 3, because it covers a great deal more time. It leads us up to the birth of Christ. He is killed. He is caught up to heaven. The church flees into the wilderness (a type of the place of safety) and away from the events of the Middle Ages (a type of the fifth seal). And then there is the Tribulation at the end; and the events come all the way up to the end time, where Satan is really persecuting the church in the Tribulation then.

So this chapter is clearly an inset chapter. It gives an overview, in a fairly detailed sequential manner. And again you see, not just a sequence of events, but very clear indication of the movement of time. Feed this back into Revelation 2 and 3 again. There are seven eras there.

The seals of chapter 6 are dual, just as the other prophecies in the Old Testament are. There is a type and an antitype. There have been times of extreme pressure on the church. No time of tribulation, though, has ever been followed by heavenly signs. In other words, the fifth seal has never been opened. And it is very likely that we are at

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some point in time within the fourth seal.

Now that is a wide expanse of time, in terms of what we are eventually going to get to.

The fact is that the events of the sixth seal have **never** followed on the heels of any kind of tribulation against the church since the time of its founding in 31 A.D. So we know that the fifth seal has never been opened—even though there have been types of it, all along the way. So that one is going to come. That is when brother will turn traitor against brother, and lead some of their brothers to death.

So types of all of the seals have already occurred throughout history, from the first century on. But we are in the cycle now that is going to conclude in Christ's second coming. The intensity is increasing; and I know that you believe that. Everybody is telling me, from every part of the country, that they have felt a greater intensity of pressure upon them—through events in the world, within their families, and whatever. Things are increasing in terms of **pressure**. But the intensity is increasing to almost unbearable degrees, and we are eventually going to get to the place where it is going to be disaster upon disaster. We will know then that we are very, very close. Now notice how chapter 13 begins:

Revelation 13:1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

So what we see here is an overview of the political system that Satan works through. Just enough is given here in this chapter to connect it with Daniel's prophecies. That gives us insight into the political system that Satan has already been using, and will continue to use, throughout history—not just during the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord.

Revelation 13:11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon.

The religious system is introduced. That is, Satan's religious system. And this compares to the man riding the white horse in Revelation 6:1-2.

Revelation 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name

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written in their foreheads.

What this chapter does is it shows the relationship of the true church to Christ, and it begins to prepare the way for events—getting us back into the chronology of the book once again. Chapter 15 is another inset chapter; but, in this case, it merely sets the stage for chapter 16—which puts us back into the chronology of events. The seven bowls of God's wrath are all poured out there, in the one chapter. And then in chapter 17 is an inset again, this time revealing the relationship of the false church to Satan's political system. And thus we see that, for long periods of time, it is the woman (the religious system) who is actually controlling the political system. She is riding the beast!

What this also does is give us insight into what is going on while the six seals (not just the sixth one, but the six seals) of Revelation 6 are being opened. Once that first seal is opened, and once the woman mounts the beast, we have here in chapter 17, an unfolding that shows that she has been controlling the political system right along (pulling the strings).

Chapter 18 gets back to the beast again, but this time it is a more definitive view of the economic system that Satan has used for all time—again, not just the end time. Chapter 19 shows the judgment of all of the elements of the Babylonian system. Every one of them is crushed. Then in chapter 20 comes the imprisonment of Satan and the resurrection; and we are back again **in time sequence** in chapters 21 and 22.

All the insets seem to be significantly introduced. Each one is introduced by an angel coming down from heaven, or an unusual vision of someone or something—like a beast rising out of the sea. So it will be some significant and stunning picture that John sees. For example, in Revelation 12, the sun and the moon and the stars and the woman clothed in radiant clothing with them. But I want you to look at chapter 11, because there is a significant difference.

Revelation 11:1 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."

It is different. What is wrong? The answer to it is that Revelation 11:1 is **not** the beginning of an inset. Rather, it is a continuation of one that has already begun—at Revelation 10:1. In the past, I think that we have been at least somewhat misled by the way that men have divided the chapters. Chapter 10 does not follow **in time sequence**

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the material in chapter 9, any more than chapter 11 follows chapter 9. Chapter 11 merely continues the material of chapter 10, which begins "*And I saw another mighty angel...*" That "another" is a clue. It is **not** one of the previous angels! It is **another** one. It was distinct from the angels blowing the trumpets, for example. It was one that was sanctified, set apart for a different use; and that was to introduce the material that is in chapter 10.

So, the seventh angel sounds in Revelation 11:15. This is one of the sequences of the ones who are blowing the trumpets. The six trumpet angels have already sounded. So this angel, in Revelation 10:1, is introducing something that will occur **before** we get to Revelation 11:15 and the seventh angel. In other words, what is in chapter 10 is going to occur *before* the Two Witnesses preach, *before* the end of the Two Witnesses preaching, *before* they are killed, *before* the resurrection occurs. So very much of what is in Revelation 10 **precedes** even what is in chapters 8 and 9—and a small portion of it even precedes the opening of the seals in chapter 6.

By the time I am done here, your head is going to be spinning. It is not because the material is deep. It is just a matter of putting it in order. That is the difficult part here.

Revelation 10:2-6 And he had in his hand a little book open. And he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. And when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, "Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not." And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by Him that lives forever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer.

I have that little book. It is **not** "Malachi's Message." It is the Bible. At the least, it is the book of Revelation, which is a portion of the Bible. (And I do not think that "Malachi's Message" qualifies as being the Word of God.) Man is to live by that Book, and that is one of the reasons that John is shown **eating it**. It is a Book that, when we eat it, we live—eternally! And no book of which man is the author is going to qualify for that! This has to be a Book that was written, inspired, by God—that when a man **eats** it, he lives. And when he eats it, it tastes so good going down; but once it is in the stomach, it creates what we might think of as being disaster.

That is because the Book that John eats—and the Book that you and I eat—*requires so much* of us. It requires our life, and it causes great sacrifice from time to time. And it gives us a great deal of pain, because it is also a two-edged sword and it cuts every way that it turns. And it turns our lives inside out, upside down—left, right, and every which way—until God is sure that we will entrust our lives into His hands in every situation. So John ate that Book.

Now the *King James* says "that there should be **time** no longer." What it means is that there should no longer be **a delay**. There should be a delay no longer—meaning that once the seventh angel sounds, the events that are depicted in the book of Revelation will then move without interruption to their conclusion.

Here is why I spent a little bit of time showing the time sequence in which chapter 10 fits. The events of chapter 11 are connected to the events of chapter 10. **From** the beginning of Revelation 10 up **until** at least verse 15 of chapter 11, there is one sequence of events. In other words, within the context of chapters 10 and 11 (at least, up until 11:15, where the seventh angel sounds) it is really one chapter; and it is **an inset**. Therefore, the seven thunders [of Revelation 10:3-4] occur *before* the Two Witnesses preach, *before* the Two Witnesses even come along [in Revelation 11:3-14]. And the seven thunders [of Revelation 10:3-4] are definitely heard *before* the seventh angel sounds, *before* the seventh trumpet blows [in Revelation 11:15].

Are the seven thunders all heard after the sixth seal? The answer to this is "No." Chapter 10 is an inset, which has not yet come to the Two Witnesses, in time. And the Two Witnesses begin speaking long before the sixth trumpet sounds. I established that to you before. The Two Witnesses preach during the fifth seal and the sixth seal. That is, during the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. The period of their preaching matches the 1260 days of the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord.

So the seven thunders, which come *before* the Two Witnesses ever begin to preach, actually begin **before** even the first seal is opened. Thus, the delay announced in chapter 7 (where it says to hold back the four winds) is sufficient to allow the Two Witnesses an environment in which to preach. That is why those things occur. God stops the major sequence of terrible destruction that is going to occur, so that the Two Witnesses will be given an environment in which they can preach.

Things cannot get so scary that everybody will be so *in fear of their lives* that they will not be able to watch television, or listen to radio or anything like that. But it has to be just scary enough that they are put on edge. And that will give impact to what the Two Witnesses say. In the end, people will hate them—because they look upon them as the

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source of all of the problems. So you understand that when the winds are held back, they are not held back completely. Rather, the intensity level is dropped to the place that will allow the Two Witnesses the opportunity to do their preaching.

But, you see, the seven thunders have already done what they did before the winds are held back. That is very interesting. So the events then of Revelation 10—the seven thunders—occur before the sixth trumpet, the fifth trumpet, the fourth, the third, the second, and the first.

Revelation 10:8-11 And the voice which I heard from heaven spoke unto me again, and said, "Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which stands upon the sea and upon the earth." And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, "Give me the little book." And he said unto me, "Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make your belly bitter, but it shall be in your mouth sweet as honey." And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey. And as soon as I had eaten it [that is, he began to assimilate it], my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, "You must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings."

What does it mean *prophesy again*? Especially, what is meant by the word "again"? Within the context of this chapter, what prophesying was done? On the surface, the answer appears to be none; but what are the seven thunders? Well, prophesying here does not mean the foretelling of events. Rather, it means *inspired preaching*. And it is interesting that [in Mark 3:17] Jesus Himself named John as one of the "sons of thunder."

Revelation 11:1 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."

It is very plain—when Revelation 11:1 is read in context with the end of chapter 10—that what occurs in chapter 11 follows **right in sequence** with what is occurring in chapter 10. John was, symbolically, a type of the Two Witnesses. It says, "You must prophesy again." What was he going to prophesy, or where and when? He was going to prophesy during the Tribulation.

But John himself was not going to preach. He was a hundred years old by the time this

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prophecy was given, and he was about ready to die. We can look back on it now and see that the Two Witnesses will preach at a much later time, as a "type" of John. They are going to say again what John had previously said.

Now, who did the prophesying in chapter 10? The **seven thunders** did! And what did the seven thunders say? They said some things that John was not allowed to write. What did "the sons of thunder"—James and John—do? They preached the gospel. And here we are told that John is to prophesy again. But he was not literally going to do it, any more than John the Baptist was literally Elijah. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah. He was a "type" of Elijah. The Two Witnesses are going to be a "type" of John and his brother, James—the sons of thunder.

We are beginning to zero in on what the seven thunders are (of Revelation 10). Again, a little review—chapter 11 begins before the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. The church cannot be measured by the apostle during those hectic and violent times. And if chapter 10 is part of the same context, then the seven thunders are **concluded before** John (as a "type" of the two witnesses) must **prophesy again**.

I want to reflect on something that I said earlier. *Time* magazine chose to portray Herbert Armstrong as **thundering** a message. It is beginning to become plain what the seven thunders are. What we see in Revelation 10 is God's message being given to mankind in seven sequential events. The first that thundered was Ephesus. The second that thundered was Smyrna. The third that thundered was Pergamos—and right on down to Laodicea.

If the thunders all occurred at once, John would not have been able to count that there were seven [separate ones]. The thunders occurred sequentially—one after the other. But they are going to finish *before* the Two Witnesses preach. That is, *before* the events of Revelation 11.

The concept that we had before (that Philadelphia would preach up until the Tribulation and then Laodicea would preach during the Tribulation) cannot possibly be true. It is Laodicea that is going to preach *up to* the Tribulation, and then they will stop. The work of the church—of preaching the gospel to the world—will be over. And *then* the Two Witnesses will pick up the baton and go from that point.

Those who will go into the Tribulation, will go into the Tribulation and be martyred—while that preaching is going on. It shows very clearly that Laodicea will, indeed, be a preaching instrument. The Laodicean church era will be completely over *before* the Tribulation begins. The Two Witnesses are a separate work, all by

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themselves—though both of them may come out of either Philadelphia or out of Laodicea, in terms of eras.

You will find in Revelation 2 and 3 that four **eras** are mentioned as being in existence at the time of the return of Jesus Christ. They are Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. If it is considered that way, then four eras are still in existence. There is also the other layer, where the churches of Revelation are seven different Christian church organizations—all of them considered by Christ to be His. The seven have varying degrees of holiness, righteousness, and faith; but all essentially have the same doctrines.

One of the reasons that John was told **not** to write what he heard was because all of the church eras, basically, said the same things. They may have said it with varying intensities. The witness in the Ephesian era, for example, was pretty strong. The witness made during the Philadelphian era was also pretty strong. But the message in the Philadelphian era was essentially the same message that was given in the Ephesian era. Thus it was the same message that John and James had already preached.

Those of us who were around in 1971 will remember it as a time of the beginning of more intense trouble for the church of God. A great deal of turmoil began then. It was a time of personal crisis for Herbert Armstrong, and it was a time of the beginning of the revelation to the church of Garner Ted Armstrong's problems, as they began to surface.

Many of you are unaware that it was during the Feast of Tabernacles, in October of 1971 that Herbert Armstrong **stopped** the radio broadcast. It was not resumed again for several months, until after it was decided that GTA had repented. It was not discovered until later that Herbert Armstrong had officially stopped the broadcast 38 years **to the day**. That is two nineteen-year time cycles. It was not planned. It just happened. Two nineteen-year time cycles to the day that the first radio broadcast took place over KORE in Eugene, Oregon—on October 9, 1933. Thus, the radio broadcast went out uninterrupted from October 9, 1933 to October 9, 1971—exactly two nineteen-year time cycles. (Incidentally, this year the Day of Atonement was October 9.)

Looking back over events that have transpired since then, is it possible that the Philadelphian era ended on October 9, 1971? That is, at the cutting off, or the stopping, of the very event that began it in Eugene, Oregon—thirty-eight years (to the day) earlier. That is a possibility. I will warn you that this is a speculation, but that would mean then that we have been **in** the Laodicean era since October of 1971.

I believe that we are in the beginning of the thirtieth year of the Laodicean era. Do we

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have eight years to go, before this era is over? I do not know. I do not mean to discourage you. I do not want you to think on that too deeply. Rather, I want you to understand that this is John Ritenbaugh's "heresy." But I find that **very interesting** because we know that God does things according to patterns. And He gives us these patterns every once in a while, to clue us in on something—and to help keep us aware, and alert to what is going on.

Herbert Armstrong himself (I heard it, with my own ears) said, "I first saw Laodiceanism creeping into the church in 1969." So he was beginning to become aware that something was changing within the church that he could see. But he was powerless to stop it. He could see that the attitudes were beginning to change.

That would mean, brethren, that the church hit its spiritual peak in the '60s; and we have been spiritually going down hill—even though physically and numerically the church had become richer and richer (if you understand what I mean) all the while that Herbert Armstrong was there. And then, once Herbert Armstrong died in 1986, everything started downhill in a big way. It was almost as if it was a sign.

I do not know whether you know this, but Herbert Armstrong died January 16, 1986. It was the last month that the income of the Worldwide Church of God showed a 30% increase. Every month after that, it went down—in small increments, but it went down steadily (just like a ship that was slowly sinking). Those records are available. Evelyn and I noticed it fairly quickly and wondered, "What does it mean?" We did not know the details of it, but I give that to you for your thinking.

It was on June 24, 1978 (about seven years following the stopping of the broadcast for that period of time) that Herbert Armstrong made his famous *Wake Up* sermon to the Pasadena congregation. Eventually this was sent out, as an audiotape, to be played to all of the churches. Fifteen times, in that sermon, he yelled at the church to "**Wake up!**" Six months later, the State of California attacked the church.

Now there is something else that is very interesting (maybe a little thing, but maybe it is more significant than we think). Eleven years after Herbert Armstrong gave that *Wake Up* sermon—so in 1989—most of you were able to hear what Evelyn and I feel was the finest sermon that Joe Tkach, Sr. ever gave in his life. It was the opening message of the Feast of Tabernacles. The theme of that message was to *quit worrying when the time of the end is, and get ready for the end!* He hammered away at this with a lot of very pertinent, colorful, and meaningful illustrations and with a great deal of intensity in what he was saying. I feel that what he was doing was giving the Laodicean church its **commission**. It was something that had already been given to him. And I believe the

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reason for the inspiration was that God was speaking through him that day—giving it to the church, through him.

As I mentioned, that was eleven years after Herbert Armstrong gave his *Wake Up* sermon.

Do you know what Bullinger says that 11 means in the Bible? **Confusion!** When Herbert Armstrong gave his sermon in 1978, it was a rallying cry to the church to **wake up** because it was going to sleep. It was growing ever more lukewarm. And what he said to the church did a small amount of good. He valiantly tried, as best he could, to rally the church around him. His theme became "*Let's get back on the track.*" But the church never got back on the track.

It got fairly well "back on the track" doctrinally. But attitudinally, there was nothing he could do about that—because Laodiceanism was flooding into the church. And so his rallying cry to the church did buck up those of us for a while; but eventually the strength of it kind of petered out. Eleven years later, Joe Tkach, Sr. gives his rallying cry to the church, but what did it produce? What was the fruit? It was **confusion**—because the church did not have, by and large, the spiritual strength to follow through any more (like it had under Herbert Armstrong). It did not have the spiritual strength to follow through and put it into practice.

The very first doctrinal change came either in late 1987 or 1988. It was rather innocuous, and most of you will not even remember what it was. But it was a different explanation of Titus 2:4-5 than we had ever had under Herbert Armstrong. That is the one that says that a woman is supposed to be a keeper at home. She is supposed to be a homemaker. Well, that group out there in Pasadena changed that. They modified it considerably—encouraging women that, if they felt okay and they needed to be fulfilled (or that kind of thing), then leave the home and go to work. I do not know their motivation.

The next one after that was the change in the healing doctrine. And that was a major, major one—because what they did is that they took **faith** out of the doctrine. God was being cut away from His people. When you begin to change doctrine, brethren, do you know what the fruit of that is going to be? **Doctrinal change will produce confusion!** It will change people's faith—because faith arises from the teaching. If the teaching is not correct, then the faith will not be correct. And because the faith was not correct, we split all over the place!

And those who had some gumption began to look for places to be fed. They began to

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look for places where they could be strengthened by and through the doctrines that had given them the faith in the first place—and try to hang on. But by the time that we get to 1994 and 1995, we have a torrent of doctrinal changes that are coming out—that are reducing and decreasing people's faith left and right. *Without faith it is impossible to please God.* And what a person has faith in, is what he is going to obey. By then, the "faith" was coming from the doctrines of this world. Worldliness was flooding the church, and strengthening Laodiceanism left and right—because that is what Laodiceanism is. It is worldly Christianity.

Revelation 12:15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman. ...

Is it possible, brethren, that the flood that came out of the serpent's mouth was these "new" doctrines—*words* that changed people's faith?! Believe me—many, many people were swept way by the doctrinal changes. **Doctrinal change changes the faith.** If it is not the faith of Jesus Christ, then it is not the faith that will honor, and obey, and submit to Christ.

Now, let us begin to wrap this up. In Revelation 10:11—where it says, "You must prophesy again"—the prophesying again has been going on for a long time. "The Work" (as we have been trained to call it), *the preaching of the gospel*, comes in two parts. (1) The **world** receives a fairly shallow version of it. The gospel is certainly preached to them, but it is (2) the **church** that hears the gospel in its full glory.

The preaching of the gospel now, towards the end of the Laodicean era, is focused not on the world. It is focused on the church. It is the church that needs to get prepared. And it is the church that needs to hear the gospel full bore. So the work of the Laodicean era—the seventh thunder—is still going on.

Some are out there, trying to preach it to the world. And I have nothing against that. But I think (between the words of Herbert Armstrong and Joseph Tkach, Sr. and what we are able to see in the fruit that is being produced) that nothing is going to be produced. It is going to be weak and insipid; and very, very few are going to be converted about it. The witness that is made is going to be so shallow and so weak, that nothing is going to happen. So, I am not against it. But I feel that the bulk of the intensity of "the work of the church" during the Laodicean era is to take care of its own—so that we are able to be prepared for the Kingdom of God. So the thunder, however weak it is, is still rumbling off in the distance. That is, the seventh thunder is still going on. But it is taking place within the congregations.

We will begin to conclude here, with just a few more scriptures.

Isaiah 55:1 Ho, every one that thirsts. . .

Do you not thirst, when you have not had any water for a while—as during a famine, or whatever?

Isaiah 55:1-4 Ho, every one that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat. Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labors for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

The lesson is clear for us, brethren. I want you to connect this to two things. If this interpretation is correct (that we are well into the Laodicean era), then it is necessary that we devote our time and energies to increase our supplies of *oil*, *water*, and *gold*. Gold? Why? Because to the Laodicean era, He says, "Buy of me **gold** tried in the fire." The images are different—water, gold, oil. Where does oil appear? It appears in Matthew 25, with the ten virgins. So we have *gold* in Revelation 3, we have *oil* in Matthew 25, and we have *water* in Isaiah 55—all of which we are to imbibe for our spiritual welfare. And there was never a time when we needed it more than we do now!

The images are different, but the principles are all the same. Go out and get these things (whether you are one of the ten virgins, whether you are in the famine, or whether you are one of the Laodiceans). It is necessary for us to devote our time and energies to increase our supply of oil, water, and gold while there is still time. And there is time (however weakly the thunder is still rumbling).

It will cost us something, but the price is well worth it because of what it secures for us in the eyes of God. Do not let this world delude you into thinking in such a way that you ignore the reality of the times we live in, and the realities of our calling.

Turn with me to Psalm 89. We had mentioned to us "the sure mercies of David." The mercies of David are the mercies that he received.

Psalm 89:20-28 I have found David My servant; with My holy oil have I anointed him. [Are you anointed?] With whom My hand shall be established. My arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him; and in My name shall his horn [or, strength] be exalted. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. He shall cry unto Me, "You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation." Also I will make him My firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and My covenant shall stand fast with him.

A Laodicean is permissive. He permits himself to live on the fence, thinking he can have the best of both worlds. What are you doing with your time? Your life is your time. How zealous are you in overcoming? Has God shifted into the background?

It is incredible to me that so many have self-righteously detached themselves from fellowship, because no minister out there is good enough for them. They are saying by their actions and by their words that the ministry is not as "perfect" as they are. That is an act of a Laodicean.

Have you invited the world into your home in an uncontrolled way, through television? During these days leading up to the Two Witnesses, are you feeding your mind with things that are right and good? Are you filling your mind with this world's attitudes, through unsavory movies? Laodiceanism is **everywhere** out there. That is where it came from. That is how it got into the church—through church members who brought it in.

This could be a very sobering revelation. What counts is our relationship with God. One cannot have a relationship with anybody without spending time together and resolving differences. Spend that time with God. Talk to Him. Listen to Him. Two cannot walk together unless they agree. Think it through. Christ is coming.