

More About the Revelation

In the last issue, our first section on the fascinating Book of Revelation began to explain how the book is structured and what it is about. We looked at the opening verses of the book and saw that the writer, the Apostle John, was being shown *things which must shortly take place (1:1)* and traced the unfolding plan of God through the first seven chapters and to about 312AD. In this article we take the next step as history unfolds and the Roman Empire comes under attack from external forces.

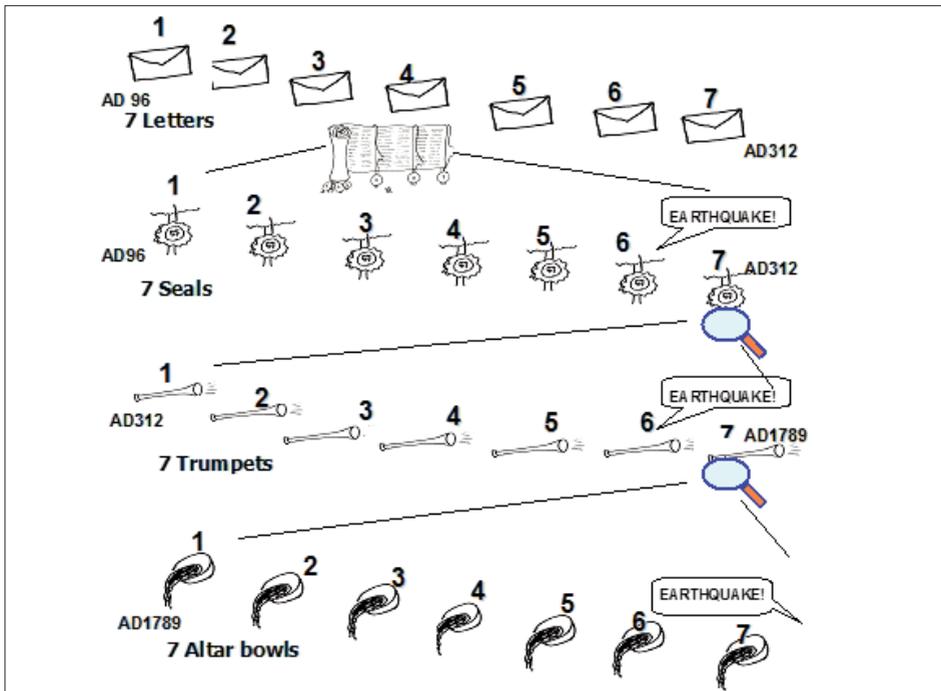
Western Rome Destroyed

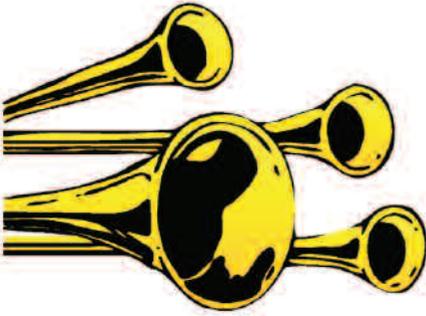
In the first section of the historical vision, seven seals were each broken

and dramatic events followed in the vision seen by the apostle John. During that period, a storm of winds had been held back from devastating the earth:

After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree (Revelation 7:1).

These winds represented barbarian invasions that were going to sweep the Empire and snuff out the political power of Rome in the West. Now, seven trumpets will sound one after the other, heralding the next stages in history as these barbarians attack:





- ❖ As the first trumpet sounds, hail and fire (as seen in the plagues God brought on Egypt through Moses) strike one third of the earth as the Goths sweep into Italy (Revelation 8:7).
- ❖ With the second trumpet, a burning mountain falls into the sea – the navy of the Vandals sinks the Romans from the Mediterranean (8:8–9).
- ❖ The third trumpet sees a meteor strike the region of rivers and streams, as Attila and the Huns crashed into the Alpine region (8:10–11).
- ❖ The fourth darkens the sun, moon and stars, which corresponds to Odoacer king of the Goths removing the last Emperor in the city of Rome, and crowning himself as king (8:12).

The Empire had three divisions in this period, and the Western third had now ceased to exist.

Eastern Rome Suffers

The Eastern side of the Empire, ruled from Constantinople, was not to escape the judgement of God. And so

the fifth and sixth trumpets continued to sound.

- ❖ The fifth trumpet blared, and a swarm of locusts emerged like smoke from a pit (this image links with Abraham's cliff-edge view of the destruction of Sodom in Genesis 19:28) and covered the face of the earth. The star that led them was Mohammed, and his followers were to overpower the Mediterranean region for three hundred years (Revelation 9:1–12).
- ❖ Trumpet six sees a huge force of cavalry race across the earth, as the Turks in turn subdue the Eastern Empire. In May 1453 they take Constantinople, and the Roman Empire comes to an end (9:13–21).

The sixth trumpet continues to reverberate for some time. Revelation chapter 10 has a vision that was kept sealed up, but in chapter 11, John sees two 'witnesses' speak out *'in sackcloth'* against the evils of their time.

These men are linked with Moses, who turned the rivers of Egypt to blood, and Elijah, who caused it not to rain. These two great prophets from the Old Testament each had to stand up and witness for God to evil, godless rulers in their own day.

By the time these witnesses were in action, the Christian church itself had become corrupt, and those who protested risked their lives. The witnesses continued to preach for 1260 years (in Bible chronology a day stands for a year) but were eventually extinguished. This period would take us to the darkness that fell upon

Europe at the time of the historic Massacre of St Bartholomew in 1572AD.

This in turn was only relieved by another great earthquake (Revelation 11:13), in which once more John sees a drastic change of rulership. This lines up with the French Revolution in AD 1789, which restored freedom of speech, overthrowing the total control of the church and kings over men's lives, first in France and then spreading to the rest of the world.

In Revelation 11:15 we eventually come to the Seventh (and final) Trumpet:

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever".

The kingdom of God is announced because all of the prophecy in Revelation and the history it describes, is God's plan leading to that kingdom.

However, this does not mean that the end has come and God's plan is complete, for there is more history to follow. The kingdom will not actually be established until the last saint (believer set aside for God) has been called by Him. In fact men and women from all over the world are still responding to the Gospel and being baptised today. At this point in the Revelation, the narrative of the drama goes back in time, like a novel, to look at what has been happening on the religious front while all these political changes have come and gone.

David M Pearce
To be continued

