

The TRUMPETS and SEALS of the REVELATION

Chapters Six to Eleven

By C. A. Sundbom

The following suggestions are given with the idea that any Bible interpretation must be fully in harmony with the writings of Pastor Russell, that faithful and wise servant of Matthew 24:45,46. In the past twenty-five years many have endeavored to bring out teachings contrary to his writings. Most of these have already been forgotten completely, and the others have been proven false to the unprejudiced. Being largely symbolic, the Book of Revelation gives a wide latitude for all kinds of divergent ideas, and unless we have some touchstone such as the writings of Brother Russell, there is no hope of agreement among the friends.

The writer has always been interested in the Revelation, but for a long time did not give much thought to it, feeling that he did not have enough knowledge of religious and secular history to interpret the seals and trumpets which already have been largely fulfilled. This was somewhat discouraging until it was realized that in Volumes II and III of the "Studies in the Scriptures," Brother Russell has given us an outline of the important historical events. The gradual stages in the rise of the Man of Sin, for instance, are clearly traced in Volume II, page 355; Daniel's prophecies are explained in Volume III. These and other events therein considered are Scripturally important and at least some of them are referred to in the Revelation. In addition, Harvest Truth has enlightened our minds respecting the meanings of Bible symbols. With these helps, we hope to make a start toward an understanding of the "trumpets" and "seals" which will be consistent with the Divine Plan, the whole Bible, and fulfilled history, and hope it will result closer to the Truth than the usual methods. It is an attempt to interpret Scripture with Scripture. The writer will be glad to hear criticism and suggestions from anyone who desires to keep fully in harmony with Pastor Russell's teachings.

The fifth chapter pictures God seated upon the throne of the universe and having in his right hand a book or scroll written within and on the outside, sealed with seven seals. The scroll represented the great plan of God. The writing on the outside told of the promised redemption through the blood of Christ. The inside contained details which were hidden - the "Mystery," the true Church; the work of the Millennial Age, and also the important events of the Gospel Age. After Jesus, the Lamb of God, had been slain in a sacrificial death, he was proclaimed worthy to open the scroll. The seals were opened successively (Z-2209) as various events of the Gospel Age became due.

As each of the first four seals was opened, a horse with a rider went forth (Rev. 6). One of the four Living Ones says, "Come." The Diaglott translation omits "and see," giving the thought that the Living One calls to the horse with its rider to come or, as Rotherham translates it, "Be going." The Living Ones (called "beasts" in the King James version) are brought to our attention first in Rev. 4:6 where it is said that they are in the midst of, and around, the throne; and full of eyes before, behind and within; and that they never cease from saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy." It is suggested in Z-529 that these Living Ones represent the four attributes of God -- Justice, Love, Wisdom and Power. These attributes permeate the throne or rule of our great Creator, and being full of eyes are all-seeing so that even during the time that evil is on the rampage in the earth, this evil can never thwart God's purpose. Even the wrath of man shall ultimately praise Him (Psa. 76:10). Thus they always say, "Holy, Holy, Holy." The events under the first four seals, including the evil things, are shown to be fully under God's control, being permitted for wise purposes.

The horses of the first four seals picture doctrines which are proclaimed in the world (Volume III, page 316, par. 2). Zechariah 6:5, speaking of a vision of horses, explains that they are spirits which go forth. In 1 John 4:1 we are told to believe not every spirit, but to try them and be sure they are of God, because many false prophets or teachers have gone forth. These Scriptures taken together give good support to the idea that horses picture doctrines. In Bible times horses were never used as beasts of burden, but mainly for war and conquest. The first four seals therefore symbolize doctrines or teachings at war and conquering; that is, they are accepted and believed after much opposition.

The first horse was white and represented the purity of the original truth delivered from God to the Apostles by Jesus. Most religious writers have claimed that this pictured Jesus conquering the world, the beginning of the Kingdom of God on the earth. This cannot be true because after two thousand years the world is still far from conquered. In what way then did it conquer? It accomplished what God designed should be accomplished in the Gospel Age, namely the selection of a Little Flock of joint-heirs with Jesus.

The rider of a horse directs it and is brought by it to his destination. The rider of the white horse seems to picture Jesus and his body members, the Church. They espouse the truths of God. They are given a bow, most likely for the purpose of propelling arrows of truth. "Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies" (Psa. 45:5). While this Scripture probably refers to the work of the Millennial Age, it shows that this use of the word arrow is correct. The work of the Gospel Age is an individual work, to those whom the Lord draws and calls (John 6:44; Acts 2:39). The arrows of truth reach the hearts of these and they consecrate. Thus the Rider conquers them as predicted. This conquering goes on during the entire Gospel Age, even though some of the truths are lost sight of during the Dark Ages.

The second horse was red and took "peace from the earth, that they should kill one another." This cannot refer to the world in general because there had been no peace that could be taken away. They had been killing each other since the time of Cain. These things did happen to the very early Church, however. At first there were no dissensions (Acts 2:44-47). Their rejoicing and love for one another made all men know that they were the disciples of Jesus (John 13:35).

We may not be too sure what doctrine would cause such a condition but in Volume II, page 355, Brother Russell shows that the earliest beginning of the Apostasy was already started in Paul's day, about A.D. 50. "The Mystery of Iniquity doth already work" (2 Thess. 2:7). This may be the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which the first stage of the Church (Ephesus) hated (Rev. 2:6). This doctrine was already in existence at that early date. It is a principle practiced by those who lord it over God's people instead of regarding all as brethren and Christ as the Head.

How would this false doctrine, teaching, take peace from God's people and cause them to kill one another? The answer is that it would cause rivalry, factions and distrust instead of Christian love. It would awaken passions common to the old nature and would assassinate reputation and character. "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Gal. 5:15).

We need not assume that the various doctrines go forth, then cease when the next one appears. The doctrines, once started, go forth and continue while others come on the scene. The doctrine of the Nicolaitans eventually reached its full fruition when one bishop was proclaimed as Christ's vicegerent on the earth. In the meantime other false doctrines were sent out. Similarly the Gospel Truth, symbolized by the white horse, continued to go forth and conquer those who would be joint-heirs with Jesus in his Kingdom.

The third horse, a black one, indicated more corruption of doctrine. The balance in the hand of the rider seemed to be used to measure the wheat and barley. The food was sold, not supplied without price as commanded by Jesus: "Freely ye have received, freely give." It also suggests scarcity, and is probably a fulfillment of Amos 8:11. "A famine, not of bread, but of hearing the words of the Lord." It is possible that the doctrine of Balaam, which is noted first in the Pergamos Church (Rev. 2:14) would cause this condition. This doctrine is explained in our comments as teaching error for profit. Bringing the financial motive into the Church was certainly a serious error of doctrine and ultimately became a source of much corruption. One who taught for profit would be quite sure to teach more or less error, as he would be an easy prey to Satan's suggestions. The great ones of the world would pay well to teach the people what they wished the people to learn.

The latter part, "see thou hurt not the oil and wine," shows that God set a limit to the powers of error. The oil represented the Holy Spirit of God which only true children of God could possess. Wine is sometimes a symbol of doctrine, as that which intoxicated the kings of the earth (Rev. 12:3). This does not seem to fit in the text under consideration. We suggest that the wine may here have about the same meaning as when used respecting the Memorial Supper. It represents the blood, the life of Jesus, shed for many. All Christians must drink this blood figuratively. "Except ye drink my blood ye have no life in you." It justifies the true Christian and makes his sacrifice acceptable. This blood, or human life-rights, of Jesus, as well as the Holy Spirit were not to be hurt. Some true Christians were developed at all times during the Gospel Age, and these two necessities ("wine" Christ's merit; the Holy Spirit) were always available even in the Dark Ages. We do not mean that the Memorial Service was necessarily understood and kept perfectly but that which it symbolized would in some way be preserved by divine power. We remember how the Church, pictured by a woman fleeing into the wilderness, was miraculously fed.

The fourth horse was pale, or livid green, sallow - a color indicating the draining away of the life blood. We hear it said, "He turned pale as death." Death was the rider, and Hades followed with him. Doctrine was by this time fully corrupted by Satan. The pure Gospel, as originally given, was life-giving.

"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life," Jesus said. Now, after several hundred years of Satan's work, the teachings had been so perverted as to be lifeless.

The particular doctrine which most likely caused such a condition is that which Daniel first wrote about, "the abomination that maketh desolate." This is explained in Volume II of "Studies in the Scriptures" (pages 98 to 104) as the doctrine of the Mass. This being directly opposed to the Ransom-sacrifice of Jesus certainly did make desolate and is aptly pictured by Death and Hades.

We read that power was given them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, hunger, death and beasts of the earth. The fourth part may be an approximate numerical division, or it may be one group out of four general classes. We have no definite suggestion as to whom this applies. The latter part indicates that this was the time when persecution of dissenters began, the "beasts" most likely being the civil powers which did the persecuting for the religious rulers.

Satan's work of sending forth false doctrines in opposition to the original Gospel Truth was now complete. Jesus prophesied of this in the parable of the leaven (Matt. 13:33). Only a little leaven was put in, but eventually the whole lump was leavened.

The Fifth Seal is characterized by a cry from the souls under the altar saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not Judge and avenge our blood?" These souls are not literal saints, because the saints slept in death until the First Resurrection, which occurred much later. As Abel died centuries ago yet "he being dead yet speaketh," by his actions of faith and example, so the torture inflicted by religious persecutors on the faithful saints of that time cried for justice and vengeance. This calling for vengeance began, we believe, at the time of the Reformation, in the early part of the sixteenth century. At this time the Lord's true people were "holpen with a little help" in fulfillment of Daniel 11:33,34 (Volume III SCRIPTURE STUDIES, page 38). The help consisted of important truths brought out by the Reformers. These truths encouraged the real Christians; and people in general began to appreciate the faithful martyrs who had been persecuted by Papacy. Those who for centuries had been thought of as heretics were now recognized as the real people of God, who had been suffering for righteousness sake. This recognition is pictured by the white robes that were given them. The opening of the Fifth Seal thus marked the "little help" given by God to the Church in the Reformation times.

The Sixth Seal is characterized by a great earthquake. In Volume IV, SCRIPTURE STUDIES, p. 531 we are told that the French Revolution is called an earthquake in the symbolic book of Revelation. It is there shown to be a prelude to the great crisis and the final great earthquake of Rev. 16:18. The other features of the Sixth Seal fit in well with the conditions at the time beginning with the French Revolution. For this reason we conclude that this event locates the time of the Sixth Seal.

This revolution was a social shock which profoundly affected human history. In Volume III, SCRIPTURE STUDIES, page 65, it is said to have resulted from a flood of truth, "stern truths regarding priestcraft and king-craft, and regarding the individual rights and liberties of all." Previously higher critics had begun to attack the Bible and Religion in general, and infidels like Voltaire had also done their work. Before the Revolution these tendencies had been held in check by the clergy and the rulers. But the Revolution swept away all restraint, and the infidels and skeptics had their day. Not only were the false religious teachings attacked, but the whole Bible was ridiculed, its truths as well as the creedal errors.

This caused the fulfillment of the other features of the Sixth Seal, "the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood." Volume IV, pages 590 to 592, show that this symbolizes darkening of the Gospel Truth sunlight for the Nominal Church. The moonlight of the Law sacrifices, being a reflection of the sunlight of Ransom truths, are of necessity obscured also. Modernist religionists refer to these sacrifices as bloody and barbaric.

The "stars of heaven" falling unto the earth represent religious leaders falling from higher to lower conditions under the influence of the social upheaval (earthquake) and doctrines of the higher critics. The true leaders of God's people are not "stars" while in the flesh. There are only twelve true stars, the Apostles (Volume IV, pages 593, 594). The "heaven" here refers to the religious element or section of the spiritual or unseen ruling powers. In 2 Peter 3:10 the various elements are grouped together and are pictured as melting with fervent heat in the great time of trouble. Heaven is also where the saints are gathered from, in the harvest (Matt. 24:31).

The latter part of Revelation 6:13 is particularly significant, indicating that the efforts to destroy the present order by revolution were premature. The stars fell as "untimely figs," before the figs are ripe. Ultimately all great ones, not only religious but all that are lifted up or exalted, will be brought low (Isa. 2:12). These religious stars fall ahead of time.

The Diaglott translates the 14th verse: "The heaven was separated from its place." It was too early for the heaven to "depart," as given in the common version. Later "Heaven and earth will pass away" (Matthew 24:35). "Every mountain and island were moved out of their places." Later, when Revelation 16:20 is fulfilled, they will not even be found. The French Revolution shook the strong rulership of the European nations to their foundations (Volume III, page 67). The religious elements were shaken from their places. Political, financial and other elements were not so sure that they needed cooperation of the religious element when they saw Napoleon humiliate the Pope. "The heaven was separated from its place, being rolled up as a scroll" (Diaglott). The two ends there began to roll together so that eventually they will be folded together as thorns, preparatory to burning as stubble, fully dry (Nahum 1:10).

The fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth verses show the great fear that came into the hearts of the civil and ecclesiastical leaders because of the "earthquake." The French Revolution showed clearly what can happen when the common people rise up. The rulers and leaders, being comparatively few in number, can do almost nothing. They hide in "dens," "rocks," etc. - earthly organizations of one kind or another. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been notable for the number of clubs, trade and political societies. These conditions carry over and are true even today. We see the tendency in "blocs" of Congress, etc.

It is worthy of note that it is not God who says "The great day of his wrath is come," but those who hide in the dens, etc. God's wrath actually comes later; but men have been taught for centuries that the day of judgment is doomsday. They instinctively realize that much they have done is wrong, and therefore fear the day of reckoning which they have been taught to expect.

It is not quite so simple to discover when the Seventh Seal is opened. On the surface it appears that the seventh chapter of Revelation, which records the sealing of the servants of God in their foreheads is a part of the Sixth Seal work. A casual reading of the 8th chapter also gives the thought that the seven trumpets sound after the Seventh Seal is opened. This has led some to put the opening of the Seventh Seal at the beginning of the Gospel Age, before the opening of the other seals. This is out of harmony with Brother Russell's writings, for he shows clearly that the opening of the seals was progressive (Z-2209). In this same article it is shown that when the last seal is opened the mystery of God would be finished as prophesied in Rev. 10:7. This proves conclusively that Brother Russell connected up the Seventh Seal with the time when Present Truth would be dispensed. This truth was to do the sealing work.

How then do we harmonize this with the objections which seem to arise from a casual reading? In the first place, the chapter divisions are not inspired, and the eighth chapter could just as well begin with what has been called the second verse. In the first six seals the opening is first stated, after which the events are described. For the Seventh Seal the order is reversed. The events are first described, then another specific event noted which marks the opening of the Seventh Seal, namely, the half hour's silence in heaven. The explanation of the Sixth Seal, we believe closes the 6th chapter. The division between the Sixth Seal and the Seventh Seal is marked by the words in Revelation 7:1, "After these things." Then the sealing of the true saints by the Harvest Truth is explained in the first nine verses of the seventh chapter, while the last verses describe the rewarding of the Great Company after they have come up through great tribulation. Be it remembered that this multitude are spirit-begotten and must be born spirit beings because each and every one of them once were of the Little Flock class who covenanted with God to give up forever all human rights and hopes. The two classes are clearly pictured in 1 Cor. 3:11-15 as both building upon the same foundation, both being saved, but one class as losing the high reward they had been seeking.

The sealing of the 144,000 (in their foreheads) is not to be confused with the general sealing of the saints with the Holy Spirit in the heart (2 Cor. 1:21,22). The latter goes on during the entire Gospel Age, while the former occurs only at the end of the Age. The sealing in the forehead is an intellectual appreciation of the Harvest Truth (Volume III, page 225). The saints who died previous to 1878 could not have known this truth. So it is reasonable to believe that they would be sealed with it following their resurrection. The Harvest Truth became the sickle which separated the saints in the flesh from the tares in Mystic Babylon.

Regarding the silence in heaven about the space of half an hour (Rev. 8:1), the following seems reasonable. The second presence of Jesus occurred exactly in 1874, but it was some time before his presence was recognized. The brethren who suggested this interpretation show that this time period was a symbolic half hour. In this period there was silence before the presence of Christ began to be proclaimed in the symbolic heavens from whence the saints were to be gathered (Matt. 24:31).

Thus the Seven Seals represented doctrines which went forth and had a great effect, especially upon the Nominal Christian Church which, until the harvest, contained the true people of God as well as the tares.

The First Seal showed the pure truth, the faith once delivered to the saints, going forth to its work of selecting a Little Flock to reign with Christ. The next three seals picture the enemies' work of sending out false doctrines which finally ended in complete corruption.

The Fifth Seal symbolizes the effect of the Reformation truths, the "little help" which God gave at that time.

The Sixth Seal represents sending forth of truth, stern truths, which caused a symbolic earthquake. The truth in this case was sent forth by Satan in fulfillment of Rev. 12:15,16, and was designed to alarm Europe as to the danger of permitting too much liberty to the people. But the earth (society) swallowed up this flood of truth and it became a great factor in the increase of knowledge, which Daniel predicted would mark the time of the end. A careful study of pages 65 to 68 of Volume III of the SCRIPTURE STUDIES will make this very clear.

The Seventh Seal also represents doctrine, the Harvest Truths of God, which have refreshed our hearts and blessed us so abundantly.

Revelation 8:2 opens the vision of seven angels with seven trumpets, standing before God. Before they prepare themselves to sound (Rev. 8:6), there is a vision of another angel who had incense to offer with (for-Diaglott) the prayers of the saints. We believe this pictured Christ offering the merit of his sacrifice for his body members. It was the antitypical fulfillment of the bringing of the blood of the bullock into the Most Holy (Lev. 16:14). This was the sacrifice of the bullock which was for himself and his house (Lev. 16:6). This makes the prayers of the saints acceptable to God.

Revelation 8:5 shows this same angel casting fire into the earth; and voices, thunderings, lightnings and an earthquake follows. We notice the similarity of these symbols to those of Rev. 11:19. The latter verse we know symbolizes the great time of trouble which destroys the present evil world. It seems reasonable to believe that Rev. 8:5 pictures the type of this, the Jewish time of trouble in A.D. 70. This would be also the baptism of fire which burned up the chaff of the Jewish nation (Matt. 3:12). The destruction comes before the sounding of the seven trumpets.

The key to the general meaning of the trumpets is given on page 148 of Volume II, STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES. The seventh is the last in a series of seven symbolic trumpets. The six trumpets must all have preceded 1874 since our Lord's second advent is at the "last trump" (1 Cor. 15:52). While some of the conditions caused by the earlier trumpets may carry over into the succeeding ones and even over into the seventh, the woe caused by the sixth ends before the seventh begins (Rev. 11:14). This is also true of the fifth (Rev. 8:12). The disturbance incidental to the sounding of each in a great measure would subside before the next began.

We are also told on the same page of Volume II that the six trumpets refer to man's doings, in contradistinction to the seventh, the "trump of God" (1 Thess. 4:16). Man has ever tried to improve his conditions and to escape from bondage, but his efforts have largely failed (Rev. 9:20,21). The Kingdom of God will bring about all the reforms which man hoped for. It will be the desire of all nations. We will therefore endeavor to interpret the first six trumpets from this standpoint.

It seems reasonable that there should be a connection between the seals and trumpets. The seals represented doctrines going forth into the earth. The effect of these doctrines upon God's people, both nominal and true, is shown under the seals. The same doctrines were widely proclaimed and they had considerable effect also upon the civilized world in general.

Experience has shown that even though the whole truth is preached to people, they very seldom hear and accept more than a few ideas, the ones that appeal to their desires. The gospel or good news of God's Kingdom as originally proclaimed when the "white horse" went forth, had much that would appeal

to the natural man. The glorious promises to be fulfilled in the Millennium would suggest many things that people would like to have done on the earth now. These would stand out in marked contrast with the slavery and evil of the Pagan governments of the time. As Christianity increased, there would be agitation for some reforms. Many would join the Church who did not understand spiritual things at all. While they were only tares, yet as their number increased they would have more and more influence in the world. History records this. For this reason we conclude that the doctrines portrayed by the opening of the seals exercised considerable effect on politics and government. These effects are described under the trumpets.

The First Trumpet shows hail and fire mingled with blood being cast into the earth. This resulted in the third of the trees and all green grass being burnt up (Rev. 8:7). We have learned that hail, being solidified water, symbolizes hard, cutting truths. We sometimes hear the expression, "The truth cuts" (Acts 7:54). Fire represents destruction. Its being mingled with blood indicated that loss of life accompanied the destruction.

These symbols taken together seem to portray the destruction of Paganism by Nominal Christianity. This was completed about the time of Constantine in 325 A.D. Satan had first attempted to stamp out Christianity by fierce persecutions. This is pictured by the blood mingled with fire. Failing in this, Satan sent forth false doctrines and caused Constantine to proclaim Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire. This was not a victory for true Christianity, but a source of new subtle difficulty for the Lord's people. It did, however, destroy Paganism. The hail, hard-cutting truths about the falsity of Pagan gods, etc., destroyed its power and influence. Trees are symbols of people, especially the prominent ones, while grass would seem to represent the common people. All of the latter were consumed as Pagans, but only a third of the leaders (trees) disavowed Paganism. The other two-thirds continued with it, probably being specially advantaged thereby. Similar symbolism of fire is suggested by Brother Russell in connection with burning of the tares (Volume III, page 146).

We remember how Jesus said, "I am come to send fire on the earth" (Luke 12:49). Yes, his truth surely did cause great destructive changes, even when it was diluted with many errors.

The Second Trumpet (Rev. 8:8,9) pictures a "Burning mountain being cast into the sea." This represents a kingdom in process of destruction. Ancient Babylon's destruction is described under a similar symbol in Jeremiah 51:24,25. While it is on fire, caused by internal friction and controversies, its final destruction is accomplished by being swallowed up by lawless, restless masses of people, the "sea." (See Berean Comments on Psa. 46:2 for a similar interpretation.)

We understand this referred to Western Rome which fell to hordes of barbarians in 476 A.D. It is of prophetic importance because of its connection with the image and visions of Daniel. The first of the three "horns" (Dan. 7:8) fell at this time (Volume III, page 76) helping to make ready for the Papal "little horn." The fall of Western Rome strengthened the bishop of Rome politically, and was a step toward his future exaltation.

The destruction of Paganism and acceptance of Nominal Christianity had given the people a measure of liberty, especially liberty of thought. They would be aptly pictured by a "sea." Water represents people more or less free from restraint. This condition was suddenly changed when Western Rome fell. The Barbarians who conquered took away liberty. Also the growing centralized authority of the Roman bishop tended to this same end. Liberty is a most important part of life, and one of the basic God-given heritages without which almost nothing can be enjoyed. Its loss therefore would well be symbolized by death. "A third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died." About the proportion of those who had gotten liberty and then lost it.

The ships probably picture individual groups of Nominal Christians. They would be riding above the general masses. Mosheim, the historian, writes that Christians living about this time had not yet been brought under central control. Each community had its own group which was presided over by a local bishop. The fall of Western Rome brought increased power to the Roman bishop. Gradually the individual Christians in the Roman area were engulfed by this power, losing their liberty. In this way the third of the ships were destroyed.

The Third Trumpet (Rev. 8:10,11) shows a star falling from heaven upon the rivers making them bitter. We have seen from our study of the Sixth Seal that a falling star represented a religious teacher falling from higher to lower conditions. In the vision under consideration it seems to picture the Roman bishop becoming the Chief Bishop. From the historical and human standpoint, this was no doubt an exaltation, but from the true divine standpoint it was the very reverse. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased."

Among true Christians one is the Master, even Christ. The recognition of one bishop as chief was a very serious error and was an important step in forming Antichrist.

As the star fell it was burning as a lamp or torch. This suggests the spectacular display which accompanies such events. See Volume IV, page 595, par. 2, of the STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES. It probably appeared to many (the worldly wise) as a progressive step toward Christian unity, thus appearing as "new light." New light always seems to be extra bright, but it is short-lived. It is like an electric light bulb just before it burns out. The star was named Wormwood, and its fall made a third of the rivers and their water bitter. Rivers are channels thru which water of truth flows (Z-499). The idea of one central authority was bitter, and caused many to die. They lost their liberty of thought and action, a most serious loss. This doctrine poisoned spiritual truths and the true Bible teachings.

When the fourth angel sounded (Rev. 8:12) a third of the sun, moon and stars was darkened. The sun represents the gospel truth centered in the ransom-sacrifice of Jesus. The moon pictures the reflected light from the Law sacrifices, while the stars are the twelve Apostles. The erroneous doctrines pictured by the pale, livid horse under the Fourth Seal, bring about this darkening. These doctrines included the Mass, the Pope being Christ's Vicegerent and ruling the earth at the present time, and Apostolic succession.

The first part of the verse seems to indicate that a third part of each luminary would be dark while at the same time the other two-thirds would be fully light. The latter portion of the verse shows that this is not the meaning, but rather there would be total darkness for a third of the time. "The day shone not for the third part of it." We suggest a possible explanation. The Gospel Age is a day, "the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). The Jewish days (also the Creative Days) began with the evening. "The evening and the morning were the first day" (Gen. 1:5). The Gospel Age day would begin with light, then reach midnight, and then morning would come. The last third of the night and the first third of the day would be dark, to fulfill the verse under consideration. The Gospel Age is about 1900 years long. One-third of this is between six and seven hundred years. The darkest period was from about 800 A.D. to 1500 A.D. when the Reformation began. Some might say that the darkness began earlier and also that the light returned earlier, at the time of Wycliffe, Huss, et al., about 1300 or 1400 A.D. From 539 A.D. when the Pope's temporal power was first recognized, Papal theologians were busy concocting interpretations to fit their theory of Papal Supremacy. Thus the darkening increased gradually and it is difficult to give a definite date for its beginning. The extreme darkness certainly covered about a third of the Gospel Age, and is acknowledged by all historians to be the Dark Ages.

Revelation 8:13 indicates a change of conditions. The last three trumpets are grouped together and classified as "Woe" trumpets. In one or more respects they must be alike. The great time of trouble described under the Seventh Trumpet is caused by increase of knowledge, and it seems that this feature is characteristic of the Fifth and Sixth Trumpets also, though to a much lesser degree. Printing was invented in 1440 A.D. This event marked the beginning of increase of knowledge. We suggest that the angel who proclaimed the coming woes would be some person or agency declaring that from that time on there would be special troubles coming upon "the inhabitants of the earth." This would be people under religious restraint, in contrast to the "sea" class which is restless and fluid, not particularly opposed to change in government or religion. The "earth" class are those who are rooted in the present order. They have a special interest in its preservation. They have accepted the religious ideas presented to them, feeling that this is God's arrangement for ruling the earth. These are inconvenienced and annoyed by changes and therefore oppose them. This class together with the great ones of earth were to feel the effects of the last trumpets. To them each would be a new woe.

The Fifth Trumpet events are described in Revelation 9:1-11. The opening verse tells about a star falling from heaven to earth. This symbol has been previously interpreted as a religious leader dropping to earthly political things. Here it probably refers to one or more Protestant leaders taking up union with State. The Reformation started boldly, but before long the Reformers succumbed to flattery from the civil powers (Dan. 11:34; Volume III STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, page 38). State-Church union is very displeasing to God and is called fornication (Rev. 18:9). Any leader who succumbs to this flattery is surely fallen from divine favor. Moreover, this would cause considerable difficulty to his followers.

"To him was given the key of the bottomless pit." This is a "covered, secret, hidden place" (Z-331). It is also that from which the beast ascends (Rev. 11:7; 17:8), and the place where Satan is cast for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1). Whatever symbolic meaning is attached to it, it should fit all three references. It is doubtless full of significance, but we have no complete thought to offer. When the pit is opened, a smoke comes out of the pit which darkens the sun and air. Smoke pictures confusion (Z-498). The sunlight of Gospel Truth had begun to shine again in the Reformation. The new

development now darkened it again somewhat, though not totally as in the "Dark Ages." Locusts came out of the smoke. These locusts had power to torment (verse 5) and were shaped like horses prepared for battle (verse 7). We found that horses were apt symbols of doctrines going forth to battle and conquer. For centuries Papacy had been the one church, giving out one line of religious ideas. Now liberty of thought began to open up and many religious ideas were brought out and contended for. These ideas conflicted with each other and caused the confusion symbolized by the smoke. Various truths long lost sight of under Papal traditions were brought out, but they were not harmonized. Calvin, for instance, championed the Bible doctrine of election, but ignored the fact that God is merciful. What truth he had, was so mixed with error as to make his teachings repulsive. One truth after another was uncovered, but no one attempted to harmonize them.

They were commanded (not by God but by their kings - verse 11) to hurt only those who did not have the seal in their foreheads. This was a misapplication of the term used in Rev. 7:3. The true sealing could not come until the time of Harvest Truth. It was probably used by each group who championed a particular doctrine. Those who believed as they did would be said to have the seal of God. Those who did not, were to be tormented--not killed as Papacy had done. The torment was not physical but that which is caused by fear. "Fear hath torment" (1 John 4:18). In fact fear was the characteristic of those times. Having received a measure of liberty from Papacy's darkness, Satan would counter with haunting fears and suggestions, "perhaps the old system is right after all." The doctrines pictured by the horse-like locusts would be the principal source of fear, however. The fear which was engendered by the condition is symbolized in the sixth verse, "In those days shall men seek death and shall not find it." This might even have a more literal fulfilment. Papal theology provided purgatory, which offered a little hope. Protestants, finding that this was not mentioned in the Bible, cast it out, leaving in their theology only heaven and a hell of torment. There was no room in between and consequently no hope at all for those who were not members of a sect. The divine right of kings was firmly believed and those who did not obey constituted authority were threatened with an eternity of torture. They could not even say, "All they can do is kill me," for according to prevailing theories which were really believed their troubles would be just beginning at "death." Thus they would desire to die, but could not even have this satisfaction.

These locusts had on their heads "as it were" crowns, not real but like gold (verse 7). They were imitations of the true gold, divine promises. The promises held out were imitations of those which are given to true followers of Jesus (2 Pet. 1:4). Their faces were as the faces of men, indicating that they were pretty much conformed to this world. Their hair was as the hair of women, suggesting Protestant sects, daughters of the harlot (Rev. 17:5) because of their church-state unions (see Volume III, STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, page 42 footnote). Their teeth were as those of lions, indicating the great crushing and devouring power of fear which takes away all enjoyment of life.

Their breastplates or defensive weapons were of iron. During the time of their power no argument of reason or facts could destroy them. The noise from the flapping of their wings is symbolical of the commotion caused by their contradictions and unreasonableness. They were like Satan who goes about as a roaring lion, endeavoring to frighten all who do not fall before him. The stings in their tails indicate the harmful aftereffects of those terrible doctrines of fear. They were not of God because "there is no fear in love." Such teachings do not edify but have the opposite effect on both the proclaimers and hearers. Their power to hurt by torment was to last for five symbolic months. This would be five-twelfths of a "time," (360 years) which equals one hundred and fifty literal years. This period began after the Reformation had been corrupted, probably shortly before 1600 A.D., and ended between 1700 and 1800. By that time the "locust" doctrines had largely lost their power to torment.

"They had a king over them the angel of the bottomless pit." The words "Abaddon" and "Apollyon" are defined by Strong's Concordance as a destroyer. It seems reasonably certain that this refers to Satan, the arch-destroyer. These locust-like doctrines were under a king, signifying definite control. All had the same object - to torment.

The description of the Sixth Trumpet events begins at Rev. 9:13 and ends at Rev. 11:13. This last verse mentions a great earthquake, which refers to the French Revolution. This was examined at some length under the Sixth Seal which was characterized by the same earthquake. In this way we locate the time of the Sixth Trumpet.

Revelation 9:13,14 describes the unbinding of four angels at the command of a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God. Horns being symbolic of power show again how all is under divine control or power, even the evil things. The four angels up till then had been tugging at the leash, so to speak. They were bound in or by the great river Euphrates, which symbolized the people who

support Mystic Babylon, (Volume II, STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, page 209). The angels were ready to do a work upon the peoples but up to this time had been hindered by the ignorance, superstition and fear of the people (River Euphrates). The cause of the French Revolution was water (truth) which Satan cast out of his mouth (see Volume III, STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, pages 65, 66). This flood of truth regarding priest-craft and king-craft was swallowed up by the people (Rev. 12:15,16) and a general increase of knowledge began. Conditions suddenly changed and the four angels were no longer bound or restrained by public ignorance, superstition and fear. Some commentators consider that "an hour and a day and a month and a year" (verse 15) is symbolic time and endeavor to locate the exact dates of the beginning and ending of a definite period. The Diaglott translation reads, "had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year." This rendering gives the thought that they were to be loosed at a specific time, a predetermined date, like "D-day" for instance. This fits the context.

Verses 16 and 17 bring horses and horsemen to our attention again, suggesting doctrines at war. A careful study of the rest of the chapter shows that this interpretation fits the whole picture. The 20th and 21st verses indicate that there was an unsuccessful attempt to reform (Diaglott) men. These verses are the basis for our thought that the six trumpets refer to man's efforts to better his lot. The doctrines were mostly along rationalistic lines, in harmony with the spirit of the time, the general idea being to make the religious doctrines reasonable. From the human standpoint this would seem to be a wise move, for the increasing knowledge was manifesting more and more the inconsistencies of the various creeds. Under the Sixth Seal we saw the "stars (religious leaders) fall to earth," "abandoning their once somewhat spiritual eminence and in their teachings coming down to the level of earthly moralists and philosophers--to the Christian-citizenship-politics level" (Volume IV, STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, page 595). The higher critics of the Bible and infidel teachers were free to do their work, and this influenced the doctrines of the time. Probably the religious leaders who fell thought that rationalistic doctrines would reform the peoples but the very reverse occurred. One-third were "killed," and the rest didn't reform. The "killing" we would understand to mean the destruction of their faiths, what belief they did have in God and Christianity. The Lord's true people who were faithfully living up to the increasing light which began to be given in a small way at the time, are not included in this picture. The ones who were "killed" were doubtless tares.

The loosing of four angels seems to be symbolic of liberty of thought in all four quarters, namely in every direction. We are reminded of the four angels of Rev. 7:1 when they are poised to do their work of allowing the winds of trouble to blow from every direction as soon as God's servants are sealed. We mention this merely to suggest that the number four is similarly used in the description of the Sixth Trumpet's events. History bears out the fact that liberty of thought in every direction began then. This gives a clue to the reason for so many horsemen (verse 16). All shades of ideas and teachings were championed each slightly different. This is in marked contrast with the fear-doctrines pictured under the Fifth Trumpet, which had a king over them. It is quite likely that non-religious doctrines such as Socialism, Nihilism and a host of others would be included, but we cannot be too sure about this. Such teachings were given with the idea of reforming men, and also failed. There are so many doctrines of all kinds and shades that we cannot regard the large number as an exaggeration, especially when it is considered the time of the vision is nearly a hundred years from the French Revolution in 1789 to the Seventh Trumpet of the Lord's Presence in 1874. While Rev. 11:14 distinctly shows that the sixth is past before the seventh begins, it may be merely the "woe" part of it that ends. The woe ends when the people are no longer troubled. The multitudinous doctrines are still with us today, and will end only when the present order is completely destroyed. In fact the various winds of doctrine have considerable to do with the destruction.

Rev. 9:17-19 gives a more or less detailed description of the doctrines. The riders had breastplates of fire, hyacinthine (not jasper) and brimstone. During their period of power, they were invincible against enemies. The heads of the horses were as the heads of lions, indicating the great power of the doctrines especially against their enemies, the old superstitious creedal monstrosities of the Dark Ages. Fire, smoke and brimstone issued out of their mouths and killed the faith of the third of men. Coming out of the mouths pictures words or teachings, which were destructive (fire) confusing (smoke) and poisoning (sulphur). All these would be destructive to faith or credulity of tares whose belief rested merely upon erroneous teachings. This harmonizes with the statement that their power was in their mouths; but there was power also in their tails which were like serpents with heads. The serpent is noted for subtlety, and the head suggests reasoning power. Together they symbolize subtle reasonings which deceive. The tails being last, suggests harmful after-effects. Error always leaves a bad taste. At first nationalistic ideas would seem to be good, but unbridled human reason eventually resulted in such faith-destroying doctrines as human evolution, etc. The result of it all was disappointment. Men did not reform but continued as selfish as ever.

The tenth chapter and the first twelve verses of the eleventh chapter should be regarded as a parenthesis. These verses have no bearing on man's effort to better his condition. These have to do with the Lord's true people and are intended for their comfort and blessing during the time of the Sixth Trumpet. We will not consider these in detail. The tenth chapter pictures the Lord's people receiving a "little book" which was to be eaten. The little book represented "the fuller opening of the divine plan from 1829 onward" (Berean Comments on Rev. 10:1; also Volume III, STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, page 89). The 1290 year period of Daniel 12:11 ended then. After the book was eaten, John the Revelator, who represented the Lord's true people, was told he had to prophesy again before many peoples and nations and tongues and kings. This pictured the glorious harvest message which went forth beginning with the Lord's second presence.

The first twelve verses of the eleventh chapter is devoted mainly to the two witnesses, the Old and New Testaments which prophesied in sackcloth of dead languages for a time. They were killed and lay dead for a time; then commenced their gradual ascent (Z-5718) which was completed about the time of the great earthquake of verse 13 which represented the French Revolution. The great increase of knowledge which began about that time was accompanied by the formation of Bible Societies (Volume III, page 50). The two witnesses had there been exalted to heaven, their proper place of honor.

In the earthquake the tenth of the city (France, one of the "ten toes") fell. Seven thousand names of men (Diaglott) were destroyed. The Roman Catholic Clergy in France had innumerable titles. These were suddenly swept away, no longer recognized, and many were literally killed. The remnant were affrighted. The remaining nine-tenths of the great city Christendom were struck with great fear and temporarily thought about God as people so often do when in trouble. The same fear was described in our examination of Rev. 6:15-17 under the Sixth Seal.

Rev. 11:15-19 describes the work done when the Seventh Trumpet sounds. In 1 Thes. 4:16 the "trump of God" is connected with the second presence of Christ, so we are authorized to conclude that this trumpet began in 1874. It covers a long period of time, the whole Millennial Age. These verses explain briefly the establishment of Christ's Kingdom, rewarding of the dead, destruction of the oppressors, God's anger upon the nations. Since the Truth friends are familiar with the details of this great time now begun, we will not consider these here.

It will be noticed that much stress is laid on doctrines, symbolized by horses. Doctrines have played a most important part in human history because it is a psychological fact that what people believe determines what they will do. Distinction must be made, of course, between what people profess to believe and what they believe in reality, in the heart. We are discussing the real heart belief, what people are convinced of, what they are fully persuaded of. This heart belief, is invariably followed by action in harmony with what is really believed. As a proof of this, note that the principal work of salesmen and political leaders is to convince or persuade people. When they have "sold" a person, their work is done. From then on the person himself will take the initiative. Because of this fundamental characteristic of human nature, we are not surprised that doctrines and teachings occupy such a prominent place in the symbols of Revelation.

It seems that many brethren who have studied and expounded Revelation, lose their perspective, so to speak. They apply the symbols to events which loom large to the present generation but which are not so important in the events of nineteen hundred years. It has been our endeavor to avoid this mistake. The Fifth Trumpet (if our application is correct) covers the general period from the Reformation to the French Revolution. It describes the general conditions when knowledge began to increase. The Seventh Trumpet, as we know, covers the whole thousand years.