

July 22, 2008

THE REAPING (HARVESTING) OF THE EARTH

The story of the reaping (harvesting) of the earth is the story of how God will, on the last day, take from the earth those people that do not know God, and who have not obeyed the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To say that the story of the reaping (harvesting) of the earth is not a pleasant story would be an understatement. Nonetheless, everyone who wishes to come to grips with the book of Revelation should hear it.

The quotations are from “The New International Version” of the Bible, published by the Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

THE REAPING (HARVESTING) OF THE EARTH AS FOUND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The story of the reaping (harvesting) of the earth begins in the Old Testament. It is sometimes difficult to understand the story in the Old Testament, because the same pictorial language that is used to describe the destruction of cities, nations and peoples is used to describe what will happen on the last day.

Therefore, we will confine this study to the New Testament, where we get a clearer view of what will happen on the last day. We will let the New Testament interpret what the Old Testament has to say about the last day. This is not an unreasonable approach since much of the New Testament was specifically written to interpret the Old Testament.

JOHN THE BAPTIST’S PREVIEW OF THE REAPING (HARVESTING) OF THE EARTH

John the Baptist spoke about the reaping (harvesting) of the earth. He gave a glimpse of the last day in his remarks about Jesus. He said,

*“I baptize you with water for repentance.
But after me will come one
who is more powerful than I,
whose sandals I am not fit to carry.
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.
His winnowing fork is in his hand,*

*and he will clear his threshing floor,
gathering his wheat into the barn
and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”*

Matthew 3:11-12 (Luke 3:17) NIV

Several things stand out in this statement by John. He said that Jesus would “*clear his threshing floor.*” He will clear away both “*wheat*” and “*chaff.*” Now, the “*wheat*” represents good people and the “*chaff*” represents bad people. Thus, both the gathering of the saints (*wheat*) and the reaping of bad people (*chaff*) are indicated in John’s statement. Such an interpretation of John’s remarks is confirmed by the fact that the “*wheat*” will be stored in “*the barn*” and the “*chaff*” will be burned. This sounds like a reference to heaven and to hell.

Here is a chart that suggests a connection between John the Baptist’s remarks other last-day events:

		LAST-DAY EVENTS								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
:	The Day	Resur- rection	Return	Gathering of Saints	Reaping (Harvesting)	Destruc- tion	Judg- ment	Heaven	Hell	
Matt 3:11-12				“(He) will”	“gather”	“clear his threshing floor”		“into barns”	burn with fire	

NOT ONLY JOHN, BUT ALSO JESUS CONNECTED THE REAPING (HARVESTING) OF THE EARTH WITH LAST DASY EVENTS

Jesus told a parable about a farmer that sowed good seed in his field and an enemy came and threw bad seed (seed of weeds) into his field.

After the weeds had sprouted and started to grow, the farmer’s servants wanted to go in and pull the out the weeds; but the farmer would not allow it. He feared that they would damage the wheat while pulling out the weeds. So the farmer said, “*Let them both grow together until the harvest.*” The farmer said that he would, at harvest time, tell his workers, “*First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn*” (Matthew 13:30b).

The disciples did not fully understand what Jesus meant, so they asked Him to explain the parable. Jesus explained to them that the farmer is the “*Son of Man*” and that the field is the world. The good seed are the “*sons of the kingdom*” and the weeds are the sons of the evil one. The harvesters are

God’s angels; the harvest time is the end of the age (world); and the farmer’s enemy is the devil.

Jesus explained further,

“As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”

Matthew 13:40-43 NIV

The teaching of this parable is that Jesus will send His angels to reap (harvest) bad people (the weeds). The weeds will be burned up and the good people will be in heaven where they will “*shine like the sun.*”

Here is a chart that illustrates that the reaping (harvesting) of the earth is to take place at the last day:

	LAST-DAY EVENTS								
Scripture:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	The Day	Resur-	Return	Gathering	Reaping	Destruc-	Judg-	Heaven	Hell
		rection	of Jesus	of Saints	(Harvesting)	tion	ment		
Matt 13:40-43					“I will weed out”			“righteous will shine”	“throw them into the firey furnace”

JESUS CONNECTED THE REAPING (HARVESTING) OF THE EARTH WITH BOTH HIS RETURN AND WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF THE EARTH

As Jesus left the temple in Jerusalem, after what must have been His last time there, His disciples called His attention to its buildings. Where upon, He asked, “*“Do you see all these things?’... ‘I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.’”*

This statement aroused the disciples' interest. So, as they were resting on the Mount of Olives, they asked Him, “*Tell us, ’...‘when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’*” Matthew 24:1-3 NIV

The disciples asked two questions. They asked (1) when the temple would be destroyed, and (2) what the “*sign*” would be of Jesus' return and the “*end of the age*” (Matthew 24:3).

Notice that the disciples correctly coupled Jesus' return with the end of the age (world). Notice also that the disciples did not couple Jesus' return with the destruction of the temple. This was also correct. (See our study on “The Return of our Lord Jesus.”)

Jesus made additional remarks about these things. Some of His remarks apply to the destruction of the temple (and Jerusalem), while others apply to the end of the age.

It is not always easy to discern which of His remarks on this occasion refer to the destruction of the temple (and Jerusalem) and which of them refer to the end of the age. It is not easy, I say, because His answers seem to run into each other. The explanation for this may be that Jesus sat with His disciples for quite a while talking with them about these things. They certainly sat together longer that it takes us to read the accounts of the conversation in the Gospels. The questions were too important, and the disciples too curious, for the conversation to have been so short. The disciples likely kept interjecting questions, taking the discussion back and forth between the various aspects of the answers that Jesus gave.

Therefore, it is difficult for us to know when Jesus left off talking about the destruction of the temple (and Jerusalem) and when He started talking about the end of the age (world). We are blessed, however, in that regard since we can compare what Jesus said on this occasion with what He said on other occasions. We can also compare what He said here with what the New Testament teaches in general. This makes it easier for us identify what Jesus was talking about.

In reply to the question about “*the sign*” of His return, Jesus said,

*“So if anyone tells you,
‘There he is, out in the desert,’
do not go out; or,
‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’
do not believe it.*”

*For as lightning that comes from the east
is visible even in the west,
so will be the coming of the Son of Man.
Wherever there is a carcass,
there the vultures will gather.”*

Matthew 24:26-28 NIV

Then He added,

*“Immediately after the distress of those days
‘the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken’”*

Matthew 24:29 NIV

Jesus continued,

*“At that time the sign of the Son of Man
will appear in the sky,
and all the nations of the earth will mourn.
They will see the Son of Man
coming on the clouds of the sky,
with power and great glory.
And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call,
and they will gather his elect from the four winds,
from one end of the heavens to the other.”*

Matthew 24:30-31 NIV

When Jesus said that, “*all the nations of the earth will mourn,*” He indicated that all ungodly people would mourn because they know that their punishment is at hand.

Notice that when the New Testament speaks of God’s saints being taken from the earth, it says they are “gathered” (not “reaped” or “harvested”). This is an important distinction; for grapes are lovingly gathered, while grains are violently reaped (or harvested) with a scythe or a sickle.

Here is a chart that portrays that ungodly people will mourn at the time when other last-day events occur:

LAST-DAY EVENTS									
Scripture:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	The Day	Resur- rection	Return of Jesus	Gathering of Saints	Reaping (Harvesting)	Destruc- tion	Judg- ment	Heaven	Hell
Matt 24:26-31			“Son of Man Coming on the clouds”	“they will gather his elect”	“nations will mourn”	sun dark- ened, no light from moon, stars fall			

THE EARTH WILL BE REAPED (HARVESTED) UNEXPECTEDLY, AS IN THE DAYS OF NOAH

Jesus said,

*“No one knows about that day or hour,
not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son,
but only the Father.
As it was in the days of Noah,
so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.
For in the days before the flood,
people were eating and drinking,
marrying and giving in marriage,
up to the day Noah entered the ark;
and they knew nothing about what would happen
until the flood came and took them all away.
Two men will be in the field;
one will be taken and the other left.
Two women will be grinding with a hand mill;
one will be taken and the other left.”*

Matthew 24:36-41 NIV

These words indicate that, when Jesus comes again, God’s saints will be taken away to safety, while other people will be left to suffer their sad fate.

Here is a chart that points to the connection between the reaping (harvesting) of the earth and other last-day events:

	LAST-DAY EVENTS								
Scripture:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	The Day	Resur- rection	Return of Jesus	Gathering of Saints	Reaping (Harvesting)	Destruc- tion	Judg- ment	Heaven	Hell
Matt 24:36-41	“that day or hour”		“coming of the Son of Man”	“one will be taken”	“the other left”				

This chart shows that both the gathering of God’s people from the earth and the reaping (harvesting) of wicked people will be events of the last day.

UNFAITHFUL SERVANTS WILL BE PUNISHED WHEN JESUS RETURNS

Prior to this conversation Jesus had said,

*“Who then is the faithful and wise manager,
whom the master puts in charge of his servants
to give them their food allowance at the proper time?
It will be good for that servant
whom the master finds doing so when he returns.
I tell you the truth,
he will put him in charge of all his possessions.
But suppose the servant says to himself,
‘My master is taking a long time in coming,’
and he then begins to beat the menservants
and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk.
The master of that servant will come on a day
when he does not expect him
and at an hour he is not aware of.
He will cut him to pieces
and assign him a place with the unbelievers”*

Luke 12:42-46 NIV

Jesus taught that a wicked servant would be culled from among His faithful servants. This is similar to what John the Baptist had taught, when he spoke of the “winnowing” of the chaff from the wheat.

Here is a chart that shows that Jesus was speaking about events connected with the reaping (harvesting) of the earth at the end of the world:

	LAST-DAY EVENTS								
Scripture:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	The Day	Resur- rection	Return	Gathering of Saints	Reaping (Harvesting)	Destruc- tion	Judg- ment	Heaven	Hell
Lk 12:42-46	“on a day” “at an hour”		“The master will come”		“will cut him to pieces”				“assign him a place with un- believers”

VARIOUS PEOPLE WILL REACT IN DIFFERENT WAYS WHEN THEY SEE THE END APPROACHING

Some people will be terrified as they see the end approaching. Jesus said,

*“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars.
On the earth, nations will be in anguish
and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea.
Men will faint from terror,
apprehensive of what is coming on the world,
for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.
At that time they will see the Son of Man
coming in a cloud with power and great glory.
When these things begin to take place,
stand up and lift up your heads,
because your redemption is drawing near.”*

Luke 21:25-28 NIV

Although some people will be terrified, others will not. Jesus instructed His followers to “*lift up*” their “*heads*” when they see the end approaching, because their redemption draws near.

Here is a chart that illustrates that Jesus was speaking of the end:

	LAST-DAY EVENTS								
Scripture:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	The Day	Resur- rection	Return of Jesus	Gathering of saints	Reaping (Harvesting)	Destruc- tion	Judg- ment	Heaven	Hell
Lk 21:25-28			“the Son of Man returning”	“redemp- tion is drawing near”	“men will faint from terror”	“heavenly bodies will be shaken”			

What we are showing, as we make our way through these passages, is that the Scriptures tie these last-day events together. Since

the Scriptures tie them together, it would be unwise of us to dream up theories that untie them.

To recapitulate, we have seen thus far in this study is that the reaping (harvesting) of the earth is tied to Jesus' return and to the horrible reaping (harvesting) of wicked people from the earth (Matthew 3:11-12 and Matthew 13:40-43 and Luke 12:42-46). We have also seen it tied to Jesus' return, to His tender gathering of His elect from the earth, and to the destruction of the earth (Matthew 24:26-31 and Matthew 24:36-41 and Luke 21:25-28).

All the passages that we have looked at so far have come from the Gospels. They show a remarkable consistency in speaking about the last day. Now we turn to the writings of the apostles, where we find the same consistency.

THE APOSTLE PAUL TAUGHT THE SAME AS JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS REGARDING THE REAPING (HARVESTING) OF THE EARTH

The apostle Paul explained why wicked people would at the end be afraid of what was going to happen to them. Paul wrote,

*“But because of your stubbornness
and your unrepentant heart,
you are storing up wrath against yourself
for the day of God’s wrath,
when his righteous judgment will be revealed.
God ‘will give to each person
according to what he has done.’
To those who by persistence in doing good
seek glory, honor and immortality,
he will give eternal life.
But for those who are self-seeking
and who reject the truth and follow evil,
there will be wrath and anger.”*

Romans 2:5-8 NIV

Paul continued by saying,

“There will be trouble and distress

*for every human being who does evil:
first for the Jew, then for the Gentile;
but glory, honor and peace
for everyone who does good:
first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”*

Romans 2:9-10 NIV

The apostle Paul said that wicked people are storing up wrath for themselves for “*the day of God’s wrath.*” They will suffer God’s wrath, but God’s people will receive glory, honor and peace.

Here is a chart that portrays the linkage:

	LAST-DAY EVENTS								
Scripture:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	The Day	Resur- rection	Return of Jesus	Gathering of Saints	Reaping (Harvesting)	Destruc- tion	Judg- ment	Heaven	Hell
Rom 2:5-10	“the day”				“God’s wrath”		“God will give to each”	“eternal life”	

THE REAPING (HARVESTING) WILL BE LIKE A BATTLE

The further one gets into the New Testament, the more often one finds the reaping (harvesting) described in military terms. The following passage shows that Jesus will come as an avenging warrior. He will punish those who have persecuted His saints. At the same time, He will give comfort to those who have been persecuted. The apostle Paul said,

*“God is just:
He will pay back trouble
to those who trouble you
and give relief to you who are troubled,
and to us as well.
This will happen
when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven
in blazing fire with his powerful angels.
He will punish those who do not know God
and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”*

2 Thessalonians 1:6-8 NIV

This passage could be interpreted as though it spoke exclusively of the final punishment of sinners in hell, following the Judgment; but I look at it as referring to the reaping (harvesting) of wicked people from the earth. My reason for looking at it in this way is that the punishment of wicked people is presented in these verses in contrast to Jesus' followers being comforted at His return. Either way that one looks at this passage, it is another in the row of passages that link the reaping (harvesting) of the earth with last-day events. The following chart illustrates this:

	LAST-DAY EVENTS								
Scripture:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	The Day	Resur- rection	Return of Jesus	Gathering of Saints	Reaping (Harvesting)	Destruc- tion	Judg- ment	Heaven	Hell
2 Thess 1:6-8			“when the Lord Jesus is revealed”	“give relief to you”	“He will pay back trouble”				

JESUS WILL OVERTHROW “THE LAWLESS ONE”

The apostle Paul also wrote of the “*overthrow*” of a man, whom the New International Version of the Bible refers to as “*the lawless one.*” Some versions of the New Testament call him “the man of sin.” Even though “*the lawless one*” will appear to be righteous, he will be in reality a foe of true righteousness. The apostle Paul wrote of him,

*“And then the lawless one will be revealed,
whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow
with the breath of his mouth
and destroy by the splendor of his coming.”*

2 Thessalonians 2:8 NIV

If “*the lawless one*” will meet his doom when the Lord returns, this suggests that “*the lawless one*” will be living on earth at the time of Jesus' return. The following chart portrays a relationship between the Lord's return and the downfall of “*the lawless one.*”

LAST-DAY EVENTS									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Scripture:	The Day	Resur- rection	Return of Jesus	Gathering of Saints	Reaping (Harvesting)	Destruc- tion	Judg- ment	Heaven	Hell
2 Thess 2:8			“by the splendor of his coming”		“the Lord Jesus will overthrow” “and destroy”				

WHAT DOES THE BOOK OF REVELATION SAY ABOUT THE REAPING (HARVESTING) OF THE EARTH?

The reaping (harvesting) of the earth is one of the main topics of the book of Revelation. It portrays the reaping (harvesting) of the earth in word-pictures, which come from earlier parts of the Bible. The word-pictures sometimes appear puzzling to modern readers, because we are not as familiar with the earlier parts of the Bible, as we should be.

Nonetheless, if we keep in mind the passages that we have looked at so far, we should be able to navigate the book of Revelation with less trepidation than might otherwise be the case.

Those of us who consider the New Testament to be a unified book will expect the book of Revelation to deal with the reaping (harvesting) of the earth in a manner that is in harmony with what John the Baptist and Jesus and the Apostles said about it. Indeed, John the Baptist and Jesus and the Apostles are our guides for leading lead us through the book of Revelation.

The first five chapters of the book of Revelation are certainly magnificent, but they are only introductory to the story of the reaping and the harvesting of the earth, which is one of the main topics of the book.

The story of the reaping and harvesting of the earth begins with the chapter six, in which John told what happened when Jesus opened six of seven SEALS. Let us cast a glance at what John wrote about the things that he saw when Jesus (the Lamb) opened the SEALS.

When Jesus opened the 1st SEAL, John saw a white horse. The rider on the horse had a bow in his hand. A crown was given to the rider and He went forth like a conqueror that is bent on conquest (Revelation 6:1-2).

It is no stretch of our imagination for us to see that the rider on the white horse represents Jesus, for He is so portrayed in Revelation 19:11, where He goes forth to fight His foes and to conquer them.

We understand from the Scriptures in general that Jesus began His conquest of His foes when He was on the earth, and we know from our own experience that He is still making conquests in the lives and hearts of men and women on earth. So the conflict is still raging.

When the 2nd SEAL was opened, the apostle John saw a fiery red horse (Revelation 6:3-4). To its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. A large sword was given to him. This vision agrees with Jesus' prediction that there would be "*wars and rumors of wars*" (Matthew 24:6). That also is still going on.

When the 3rd SEAL was opened, the apostle John saw a black horse (Revelation 6:5-6). Its rider had a pair of scales in his hand and John heard a voice say, "*A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!*" (Revelation 6:6 NIV). Some people interpret these words as though they were predicting famines on the earth, but the words may signify just the opposite. The reason for saying that is that the words are quoted from 2 Kings 7:1,18, where the prophet Elisha predicted that there would be plenty of food for the inhabitants of the city of Samaria. Elisha's prophecy came true after Ben-Hadad and his Aramians left off besieging Samaria and fled, leaving their provisions behind. As a result of their hasty flight, there was plenty of oil and wine for the people of the city of Samaria. Also this is still going on, for there are seasons of plenty in certain places at certain times, depending on the way that the people there live.

When the 4th SEAL was opened, the apostle John saw a pale horse (Revelation 6:7-8). Its rider was named "Death." "Hades" followed closely behind "Death." Power was given Death and Hades to kill a fourth of the people of the earth with sword, famine, plagues and wild beasts. Those of us that have lived in the 20th century saw some of the bloodiest conflicts in the history of mankind. The killing has not yet stopped and people are still dying.

When the 5th SEAL was opened, John saw the souls of those that had been slain because of the word of God and because of the testimony they had given. These souls cried out in a loud voice, "*How long, Sovereign*

Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" (Revelation 6:10 NIV). To each of them was given a white robe and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number would be completed of their fellow servants and brothers, who would be killed (Revelation 6:9-11). The 5th SEAL provides us with a glimpse of what is going on behind the veil, hidden from human view. Christian people in certain places are still being killed today because of their faith

The first five SEALS give only the broad outlines of developments, which lead up to the reaping (harvesting) of the earth. The events in the SEALS do not need to be viewed as happening consecutively, one after another. They may be seen as contemporaneous with each other, going on at the same time. For example, even though wars may be waged in different places, Jesus will at the same time continue to conquer the hearts of men and women. Likewise, although some people have to face death by persecution, some people enjoy prosperity during their lifetimes. While these things are happening on earth, those who have been killed for Jesus' sake are resting until their number is full.

Here is a little chart that presents the SEALS in vertical position, suggesting that the events that are described in each of the SEALS may transpire at the same time.

1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th
S	S	S	S	S
E	E	E	E	E
A	A	A	A	A
L	L	L	L	L

At this point in the book of Revelation, after the five SEALS have been opened, we come to the reaping (harvesting) of the earth under the 6th SEAL.

THE 6TH SEAL DESCRIBES THE REAPING (HARVESTING) OF THE EARTH

When the 6th SEAL was opened (Revelation 6:12-17), the apostle John saw the very things happen, of which Jesus had spoken in Matthew 24:29 and Luke 21:25. John saw the sun darkened and the moon turned red. He also saw stars falling and the sky being rolling up like a scroll. In

addition, he saw mountains and islands being removed from their places. John wrote,

*“I watched as he opened the sixth seal.
There was a great earthquake.
The sun turned black like sackcloth
made of goat hair,
the whole moon turned blood red,
and the stars in the sky fell to earth,
as late figs drop from a fig tree
when shaken by a strong wind.
The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up,
and every mountain and island was removed
from its place.”*

Revelation 6:12-14 NIV

John also saw kings, princes and generals. He saw rich and mighty people, as well as slaves and free people of the earth, cringing before God and the Lamb. He saw them hiding in caves and among the rocks. He heard people calling out, as Jesus had foretold in Luke 21:25-26, to the mountains and the rocks, saying,

*‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him
who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!
For the great day of their wrath has come,
and who can stand?’”*

Revelation 6:16-17 NIV

Looking at the 6th SEAL from the point of view of our day, we would say that the sun has not yet been darkened (for any length of time) and the moon has not yet turned (permanently) red. Meteorites have fallen but no stars have fallen. The sky has not been rolled up like a scroll. No mountains and islands have been moved very far from their places in recent memory. People have not (in any large numbers) called upon the mountains and rocks to fall upon them. Therefore, it would be hard for us to maintain that the happenings described by the 6th SEAL have already taken place.

Here is a chart that portrays the reaping (harvesting) of the earth, as revealed under the 6th SEAL, as one of the last-day events:

	LAST-DAY EVENTS								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Scripture:	The Day	Resur- rection	Return of Jesus	Gathering of Saints	Reaping (Harvesting)	Destruc- tion	Judg- ment	Heaven	Hell
Revelation 6:12-17	“the great day of their wrath”				“fall on us and hide us”	“sky receded”	“every mountain and every island”	“from the face of him who sits on the throne”	“moved”

This chart illustrates that the day, on which the reaping (harvesting) of the earth will take place, is called (under the 6th SEAL), “*the great day of their wrath.*” It is “the last day,” for it is the day on which the earth will be destroyed. It is the day on which the sky will recede and every mountain and every island will be moved. It is also the Day of Judgment.

Consequently, we can say that the sixth chapter of Revelation (which tells about the six SEALS) starts out with a view of Christ as conqueror and ends up with a description of His reaping (harvesting) the earth. Therefore, chapter six could rightfully be called a “mini-revelation.” It is only one, however, in a series of mini-revelations in the book of Revelation.

The book of Revelation does not seem to reveal events in strict chronological order. Instead, the book contains a series of mini-revelations, which is what William Hendriksen showed in his excellent book “More than Conquerors.” Each of these mini-revelations, however, is chronological internally.

After a brief interlude in chapter seven, chapter eight starts anew with a view of events that lead up to the reaping (harvesting) of the earth.

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

Trumpets have been used since time immemorial to announce upcoming events. They are used in this fashion here. The TRUMPETS one through five (Revelation 8:6-9:12) announce plagues to come.

These plagues are so severe that a person would have difficulty finding many events in the history of mankind with which to compare them. This being the case, it would be wise for us to conclude that these plagues are yet in the future. No one knows, of course, when they will take place.

Here is a synopsis of the five plagues that the TRUMPETS announce:

The first angel blew his TRUMPET and a third of the earth, a third of the trees, and of all green grass was burned (Revelation 8:7).

When the second angel blew his TRUMPET, something like a huge, blazing mountain was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea turned to blood. A third of living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed (Revelation 8:8-9).

When the third angel blew his TRUMPET, a blazing star, named "*Wormwood*" fell on a third of the rivers and springs of water. A third of the waters became bitter, and many people died from the waters (Revelation 8:10-11).

When the fourth angel blew his TRUMPET, a third of the sun, the moon and the stars were darkened. A third of the day was without light and a third of the night was also dark (Revelation 8:12).

When the 5th TRUMPET was sounded, the Abyss was opened and smoke came out of it. Out of the smoke came locusts. Power was given the locusts for five months to torture people who did not have God's seal on their foreheads. The locusts had on their heads something like crowns, and their faces resembled human faces. Their hair was like women's hair and their teeth were like lions' teeth. They had breastplates of iron and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of horses and chariots. Their tails had stings like scorpions. The Abyss was their king, whose name is "Abaddon" or "Apollyon." The events of the 5th TRUMPET will be so severe that they are called "the FIRST WOE" (Revelation 8:13-9:12).

Here is a chart showing the TRUMPETS in horizontal position, suggesting that the TRUMPETS will follow one upon another.

1st T R U M P E T
2nd T R U M P E T
3rd T R U M P E T
4th T R U M P E T
5th T R U M P E T

THE SIXTH TRUMPET

The actual reaping (harvesting) of the earth is not related in the list of the TRUMPETS until we come to the 6th TRUMPET. When the 6th TRUMPET is sounded, we find the second description that we have in the book of Revelation of the reaping (harvesting) of the earth. The first description was found under the 6th SEAL (Revelation 6:12-17). This suggests that some of the events of the first five SEALS may still be going on when the events described under the 6th TRUMPET begin.

When John heard the 6th TRUMPET, he also heard a voice announcing that the four angels, who had been kept ready, should be released to do their assigned tasks. John wrote,

*“The sixth angel sounded his trumpet,
And I heard a voice coming from
the horns of the golden altar
that is before God.
It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet,
‘Release the four angels
who are bound at the great river Euphrates.’
And the four angels who had been kept ready
for this very hour and day and month and year
were released to kill a third of mankind.
The number of the mounted troops was
two hundred million. I heard their number.”*

Revelation 9:13-16 NIV

John then described the horses and riders in the two hundred million troupes. He said,

*“The horses and riders I saw in my vision
looked like this:
Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue,
and yellow as sulfur.
The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions,
and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur.”*

Revelation 9:17 NIV

These are obviously war-horses, but their power is in their mouths and their tails. Their tails are like snakes, with which they inflict injury upon people (Revelation 9:19).

It is mystifying to me that these calamities do not cause people on the earth to repent. Instead, they will continue to call on their idols and to commit fornication and robbery (Revelation 9:20-21).

It is also mystifying that only a third of mankind is reported as having been killed in the vision of the 6th TRUMPET. Therefore, it might be asked, "How can the 6th TRUMPET be said to deal with the final battle if only a third of mankind is killed?"

In spite of the fact that this is a problem, the 6th TRUMPET does, indeed, seem to tell the story of the reaping (harvesting) of the earth; for when the 7th (and final) TRUMPET is sounded (Revelation 11:15) the battle is over. We know that the battle is over because when the 7th TRUMPET sounded, the apostle John heard voices in heaven say,

*"The kingdom of the world has become
the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ."*

Revelation 11:15b NIV

Here is a chart that illustrates that the 6th TRUMPET tells of the reaping (harvesting) that will take place on the last day:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Scripture:	The Day	Resur- rection	Return of Jesus	Gathering of Saints	Reaping (Harvesting)	Destruc- tion	Judg- ment	Heaven	Hell
Revelation 9:13-16	"the very hour and day and month"				"to kill a third of mankind"				

The 6th TRUMPET is similar to the 6th SEAL in that it also tells of the reaping (harvesting) of the earth. Yet, neither of them tell the whole story. In order to get more information about the reaping (harvesting) of the earth, we must now leap over to chapter 14 of the book of Revelation.

REVELATION 14:6-17

Revelation chapter 14 tells of three angels, which John saw. Each of them had good news to announce. Here is what the apostle John wrote about the first of the these three angels:

“Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.’”

Revelation 14:6-7 NIV

Here is what the apostle John wrote about the second of these three angels:

“A second angel followed and said, ‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.’”

Revelation 14:8 NIV

Here is what he wrote about the third angel:

“A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image,

or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.”
Revelation 14:6-11

These three angels made three great announcements. The first one announced that *“the hour of his judgment has come.”* The second announced, *“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the great.”* The third announced that everyone that worships the beast and his image and who receives his mark would *“drink of the wine of God’s fury”* from *“the cup of his wrath.”* These pronouncements are code expressions for the last day. The use of them shows that the three angels were referring to the last day. Here is a chart that illustrates this:

		LAST-DAY EVENTS								
Scripture:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
	The Day	Resur- rection	Return of Jesus	Gathering of Saints	Reaping (Harvesting)	Destruc- tion	Judg- ment	Heaven	Hell	
Rev 14:6-11					“Fallen is Babylon” “the wine of God’s fury”		“the hour of his judgment has come”		“tormented with burning sulfer”	

THE REAPING OF GRAIN

Coming now to yet another vision in Revelation chapter 14, we find the reaping (harvesting) of the earth compared to the reaping of grain. The apostle John said,

*“I looked,
and there before me was a white cloud,
and seated on the cloud was
one ‘like a son of man’
with a crown of gold on his head
and a sharp sickle in his hand.
Then another angel came out of the temple
and called in a loud voice
to him who was sitting on the cloud,
‘Take your sickle and reap,
because the time to reap has come,
for the harvest of the earth is ripe.’
“So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle*

over the earth, and the earth was harvested.”

Revelation 14:14-16

It is easy to identify the One that is sitting on the cloud. He has a golden crown on His head. Who else could it be, but Jesus Himself? He is the One, who will reap (harvest) the earth. His holy angels will help Him do it, but He is the One who will initiate it.

THE HARVESTING OF THE GRAPES

In the next vision in Revelation 14, the apostle John saw yet another angel coming forth to reap (harvest). The angel did not come to reap “grain” but to harvest “grapes.” Although the imagery has changed, the meaning is the same, namely, that the earth will be reaped (harvested). John said,

*“Another angel came out of the temple in heaven,
and he too had a sharp sickle.
Still another angel, who had charge of the fire,
came from the altar
and called in a loud voice
to him who had the sharp sickle,
‘Take your sharp sickle
and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine,
because its grapes are ripe.’
The angel swung his sickle on the earth,
gathered its grapes
and threw them into the great winepress of God’s wrath.
They were trampled in the winepress outside the city,
and blood flowed out of the press,
rising as high as the horses’ bridles
for a distance of 1,600 stadia.”*

Revelation 14:17-20

The imagery is of grapes being gathered and thrown into a winepress, where they are trampled. Here is a chart that connects the reaping (harvesting) of the grain and the grapes with the return of Jesus:

	LAST-DAY EVENTS								
Scripture:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	The Day	Resur- rection	Return of Jesus	Gathering of Saints	Reaping (Harvesting)	Destruc- tion	Judg- ment	Heaven	Hell
Rev 14:14-20			“seated on a cloud” “Son of Man”		“swung his his sickle over the earth” “gathered its grapes”				

Imagery of grain being reaped harps back to Jeremiah 51:33 and other Scriptures. The imagery of grapes being harvested and thrown into a winepress harps back to Isaiah 63:1-4, where God’s vengeance on Edom is described. Such imagery is also used in Joel 3:13, where the imagery of the reaping of grain and of the harvesting of grapes are both used. The events described in Joel 3:12-15 can easily be identified as finding their completion on the last day.

Now we come to the BOWLS of God’s wrath.

THE SEVEN BOWLS OF GOD’S WRATH

The seven BOWLS are somewhat similar to the seven TRUMPETS, at which we just now looked. Here is synopsis of the first five BOWLS and a comparison of them with the first five TRUMPETS:

When the 1st BOWL (Revelation 16:2) is poured out on the earth, sores break out on the skin of people, who have the mark of the beast and who worship his image. By way of comparison, the 1st TRUMPET (Revelation 8:7) spoke of hail, fire, and blood being hurled to the earth, whereby a third of the earth and its greenery was burned up.

When the 2nd BOWL (Revelation 16:3) is poured out on the sea, the sea turns to blood and every living thing in the sea dies. As we saw, the 2nd TRUMPET (Revelation 8:8-9) told of a third of the sea being turned to blood. As a result, a third of the sea-creatures died and a third of the ships were destroyed.

When the 3rd BOWL (Revelation 16:4-7) is poured out on rivers and springs of water, they become blood. This is similar to the 3rd TRUMPET (Revelation 8:10-11), which spoke of a blazing star falling on a third of the rivers and the springs of the earth, turning them bitter and many people died.

When the 4th BOWL (Revelation 16:8-9) is poured out on the sun, people are scorched with heat. Somewhat parallel to this, the 4th TRUMPET (Revelation 8:12) spoke of the sun, moon, and stars being struck, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day and the night lost their light.

When the 5th BOWL (Revelation 16:10-11) is poured out on the throne of the beast, his kingdom is plunged into darkness. By way of contrast, the 5th TRUMPET (Revelation 9:1-11) spoke of the Abyss being opened, out of which came terrible locusts that harassed people for five months.

From a comparison of the BOWLS and TRUMPETS, it can be seen that they are somewhat similar, but not entirely so. Whether or not they represent the same events and whether or not those events will happen in conjunction with each other is a matter of speculation. Although people have expended much effort in an attempt to identify these events, no one knows for sure what they are and what they will be like, except that they will be most unpleasant.

Here is a chart that suggests that the first five BOWLS and the first five TRUMPETS show that events in each of them take place in sequence, one event following upon the other. All this happens prior to the reaping (harvesting) of the earth.

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	
	S	S	S	S	S	
	E	E	E	E	E	
1 st TRUMPET	A	A	A	A	A	1 st BOWL
2 nd TRUMPET						2 nd BOWL
3 rd TRUMPET	L	L	L	L	L	3 rd BOWL
4 th TRUMPET						4 th BOWL
5 th TRUMPET						5 th BOWL

The chart suggests that the SEALS may cover an extended period of time and that some of the events of the SEALS may still be going on when the events of the TRUMPETS and the BOWLS start taking place.

WHAT THE 6TH BOWL REVEALS ABOUT THE REAPING (HARVESTING) OF THE EARTH

Now that we come to the 6th BOWL, we find that the events are easier to identify than what the first five BOWLS reveal. This is because the 6th BOWL has parallels in other Bible passages. The 6th BOWL is very similar to the 6th SEAL and to the 6th TRUMPET. All three describe the reaping (harvesting) of the earth. While this is true, the 6th BOWL tells only of events that lead up to the last battle. It does not portray the actual battle itself.

Concerning the 6th BOWL, the apostle John said,

*“The sixth angel poured out his bowl
on the great river Euphrates,
and its water was dried up
to prepare the way for the kings from the East.
Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs;
they came out of the mouth of the dragon,
out of the mouth of the beast
and out of the mouth of the false prophet.
They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs,
and they go out to the kings of the whole world,
to gather them for the battle
on the great day of God Almighty.
‘Behold, I come like a thief!
Blessed is he who stays awake
and keeps his clothes with him,
so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.’
Then they gathered the kings together
to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.”*

Revelation 16:12-16

These verses describe the last day. They speak of the “*great day of God almighty.*” The “*great day of God almighty*” is the last day.

Revelation 16:12-16 also contain the refrain, “*Behold, I come like a thief,*” which refers to Jesus’ return. See our study of “The Return of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

These verses (Revelation 16:12-16) also mention the gathering of kings for battle, which is an echo of the prediction in Ezekiel 38:2-7 and Ezekiel 39:1. This battle is mentioned here in Revelation 16:16, where it

called the battle of “Armageddon.” Everyone understands that the battle of Armageddon will be the last battle. In that battle, wicked people will be reaped (harvested) from the earth.

There are other last-day events clustered around the reaping (harvesting) of the earth in this passage (Revelation 16:12-16). Here is a chart that illustrates the conjunction of events:

	LAST-DAY EVENTS								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Scripture:	The Day	Resur- rection	Return of Jesus	Gathering of Saints	Reaping (Harvesting)	Destruc- tion	Judg- ment	Heaven	Hell
Rev. 16:12-16	“great day of God Almighty”		“I come like a thief”		“gather them for the battle” “Armageddon”				

THE SEVENTH BOWL

The 7th BOWL is a continuation of the events described under the 6th BOWL. The two BOWLS together tell a complete story. Here is how the apostle John described the 7th BOWL:

*“The seventh angel
poured out his bowl into the air,
and out of the temple came a loud voice
from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’
Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings,
peals of thunder and a severe earthquake.
No earthquake like it has ever occurred
since man has been on earth,
so tremendous was the quake.
The great city split into three parts,
and the cities of the nations collapsed.
God remembered Babylon the Great
and gave her the cup filled with the wine
of the fury of his wrath.
Every island fled away
and the mountains could not be found.
From the sky huge hailstones
of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men.*

And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.”

Revelation 16:17-21

The reading of the above passage should convince anyone that the 7th BOWL speaks of the last day. This is true because it places the reaping (harvesting) of the earth side-by-side with the destruction of the earth, as the following chart illustrates:

	LAST-DAY EVENTS								
Scripture:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	The Day	Resur- rection	Return	Gathering of Saints	Reaping (Harvest)	Destruc- tion	Judg- ment	Heaven	Hell
Rev. 16:17-21					“Babylon” “the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath”	“every island fled away” “moun- tains could not be found”			

When these things begin to happen, people on earth will also be pummeled with giant hailstones (Revelation 16:21). Since no one can live under such conditions, it is evident that what we have before us is a picture of the earth’s being reaped (harvested). It is a description of the end. The picture of islands fleeing away and of mountains disappearing enhances the thought that this is the end.

The “*cup of God’s wrath*” and “*the fall of Babylon,*” which are used here and in Revelation 14:6-20 and Revelation 16:17-21, are code words from the Old Testament. The use of them leads us to the conclusion that Revelation 14:6-20 (the messages of the three angels) and Revelation 16:17-21 (the 6th BOWL) are speaking about the same things. This suggests that there is redundancy in the book of Revelation. That is to say, there are in it several retellings of the same events.

CHAPTER 17 OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Continuing our study of the reaping (harvesting) of the earth we come to Revelation chapter 17, where the kings of the earth ally themselves with the beast. It is strange that the kings of the earth would ally themselves with the beast and with his losing cause. It is even stranger that the kings would think they could prevail against the Lamb. Human nature being what it is,

however, they will try; but the outcome is a foregone conclusion. An angel said to the apostle John,

*“The ten horns you saw are ten kings
who have not yet received a kingdom,
but who for one hour
will receive authority as kings along with the beast.
They have one purpose
and will give their power and authority to the beast.
They will make war against the Lamb,
but the Lamb will overcome them
because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—
and with him will be his called,
chosen and faithful followers.”*

Revelation 17:12-14

This is another of the passages that describe the reaping (harvesting) of the earth as a battle. An angel told the apostle John that ten kings, symbolized by ten horns, would reign at the same time as the beast for “one hour.” The angel also said that the ten kings would make war on the Lamb but that they would not prevail.

If the Lamb will have His “*faithful followers*” with Him when He comes, as the above passage indicates, then the dead in Christ will have been resurrected by the time that the final battle begins. The saints who were on the earth will by then have been gathered to Christ. So we encounter several of the major last-day events in Revelation 17:12-14, as the following chart will show.

	LAST-DAY EVENTS								
Scripture:	1 The Day	2 Resur- rection	3 Return of Jesus	4 Gathering of Saints	5 Reaping (Harvesting)	6 Destruc- tion	7 Judg- ment	8 Heaven	9 Hell
Rev. 17:12-14		“his called, chosen and faithful followers”	“make war against the Lamb”	“with him”	“the Lamb will over- come them”				

THE DIRGE OVER THE FALL OF BABYLON

Chapter 18 of the book of Revelation contains a dirge over the fall of Babylon. The sinful excesses of Babylon, which are described in this chapter, sound similar to what went on in Rome in the first century. The description of the excesses, however, could apply as well to any modern city of today; for where is there a large city on earth that is not full of vice and crime? Or, what large city of today is not, in essence, a Roman city? The very word “city” is a Roman word, and the use of the word shows the influence of Rome.

As we have suggested above, “*the fall of Babylon*” is a Biblical code expression for the reaping of the earth. Here is a part of the dirge, which an angel spoke concerning Babylon’s fall:

*“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!
She has become a home for demons
and a haunt for every evil spirit,
a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird.
For all the nations have drunk
the maddening wine of her adulteries.
The kings of the earth committed adultery with her,
and the merchants of the earth
grew rich from her excessive luxuries.”*

Revelation 18:2-3

The dirge over Babylon continues with the words:

*“Then I heard another voice from heaven say:
‘Come out of her, my people,
so that you will not share in her sins,
so that you will not receive any of her plagues;
for her sins are piled up to heaven,
and God has remembered her crimes.
Give back to her as she has given;
pay her back double for what she has done.
Mix her a double portion from her own cup.
Give her as much torture and grief
as the glory and luxury she gave herself.
In her heart she boasts, ‘I sit as queen;
I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.’*

*Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her:
death, mourning and famine.
She will be consumed by fire,
for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.”*

Revelation 18:4-8.

It seems appropriate to take these words as a poetic lament over the loss of material goods when the earth is being reaped (harvested). The thought that Babylon will be consumed “*in one day*” and “*in one hour*” suggests that it will be the last day. The following chart portrays the connection between the Day and the reaping (harvesting) of the earth:

	LAST-DAY EVENTS								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Scripture:	The Day	Resur- rection	Return of Jesus	Gathering of Saints	Reaping (Harvesting)	Destruc- tion	Judg- ment	Heaven	Hell
Rev 18:3-24	“in one day” “in one hour”					“Woe, O... Babylon” “consumed by fire”			

THE KING OF KINGS (AND LORD OF LORDS) IS VICTORIOUS

The description of the reaping (harvesting) of the earth becomes ever more graphic in chapter 19, where it is presented even more clearly as a final battle:

At that time, the Lord Jesus will appear on a white horse. On His head will be many crowns, and He will judge and make war. He and His forces will overcome His enemies. The apostle John saw all of this in a vision and here is what he wrote,

*“I saw heaven standing open
and there before me was a white horse,
whose rider is called Faithful and True.
With justice he judges and makes war.
His eyes are like blazing fire,
and on his head are many crowns.
He has a name written on him
that no one knows but he himself.
He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood,
and his name is the Word of God.*

*The armies of heaven were following him,
riding on white horses
and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.
Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword
with which to strike down the nations.
'He will rule them with an iron scepter.'
He treads the winepress of the fury
of the wrath of God Almighty.
On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:
KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.
"And I saw an angel standing in the sun,
who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair,
'Come, gather together for the great supper of God,
so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals,
and mighty men, of horses and their riders,
and the flesh of all people,
free and slave, small and great.'
"Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth
and their armies gathered together
to make war against the rider on the horse
and his army."*

Revelation 19:11-19

Revelation 19 continues with a description of what will happen to the beast and to his false prophet and to his worshipers. They will be defeated in battle and taken captive. It says,

*"But the beast was captured,
and with him the false prophet
who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf.
With these signs he had deluded those
who had received the mark of the beast
and worshiped his image.
The two of them were thrown alive
into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.
The rest of them were killed with the sword
that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse,
and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh"*

Revelation 19:20-21

This passage connects the reaping (harvesting) of the earth with the return of Jesus, for there can be no mistaking the identity of the one who rides the white horse. He is the “*Word of God,*” the “*King of Kings and Lord of Lords.*” The kings of the earth and their armies will gather to make war against Him, but He will kill them with the sword of His mouth.

Here is a chart that demonstrates the connection in this passage of the reaping (harvesting) with the return of Jesus:

	LAST-DAY EVENTS								
Scripture:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	The Day	Resur- rection	Return of Jesus	Gathering of Saints	Reaping (Harvesting)	Destruc- tion	Judg- ment	Heaven	Hell
Rev. 19:11-21			“whose rider is called faithful and true”		“sharp sword to strike down the nations”				

The above passage (Revelation 19:11-21) describes both the return of Jesus and the final battle in which the kings of the earth and their armies will be destroyed.

GOG AND MAGOG

We now come to Revelation chapter 20, which contains the last presentation of the reaping (harvesting) of the earth in the Bible. This presentation is a recap of Christ’s winning the final battle and the devil’s losing it. For a time the devil will appear to have won, but victory will evade his grasp.

Revelation chapter twenty repeats some of the word pictures that the previous chapters have used. Here is what the apostle John said about the preparations for the battle:

*“When the thousand years are over,
Satan will be released from his prison
and will go out to deceive the nations
in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog—
to gather them for battle.
In number they are like the sand on the seashore.
They marched across the breadth of the earth
and surrounded the camp of God's people,*

the city he loves.”

Revelation 20:7-9a

John foretold the outcome of the battle. He said,

“But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them””

Revelation 20:9b-11

The phrase *“when the thousand years are over”* reminds us of the words, *“With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day* (2 Peter 3:8; Psalm 90:4). When the right time has come, Satan will be released from prison, and he will start doing again the same things he had done before he was put in prison. That is, he will go forth to *“deceive the nations.”* The fact that he will deceive nations has already been referred to in Revelation 16:13-14, where it is pointed out that he will deceive them by *“evil spirits”* and *“spirits of demons.”*

Two of the kings that Satan will deceive are *“Gog”* and *“Magog.”* Satan will *“gather them for battle.”* They will be aggressors in the ensuing battle, but fire will come down from heaven and devour them. Then the devil, along with his earthly subordinates (the beast and the false prophet), will be thrown into the lake of fire.

The following chart illustrates that Revelation 20:7-11 is a last-day passage. According to it, the reaping (harvesting) of wicked nations of the earth will be followed by the destruction of the earth and by the judgment. After that, people that are judged and condemned will be thrown into the *“lake of burning sulfur”* (Revelation 20:15).

	LAST-DAY EVENTS									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Scripture:	The Day	Resur-	Return	Gathering	Reaping	Destruc-	Judg-	Heaven	Hell	
		rection	of Jesus	of Saints	(Harvesting)	tion	ment			
Rev 20:7-11					“devoured them”	“no place for them”	“great white throne”		“thrown into the lake”	

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN REVELATION CHAPTERS 14, 16, AND 18

Also chapters 14, 16, and 18 have certain features in common. All three speak of the cup of the wrath of God and of the fall of Babylon. Here is a chart that exemplifies this:

CODE EXPRESSIONS THAT IDENTIFY THE LAST DAY

Rod of iron	Supper of the great God	Reaping the earth	Treading the wine-press	Cup of the wrath of God	Fall of Babylon	Kings gathered for battle	Behold, I come like a thief	Fire from heaven
				Ps 60 3 Ps 75:8 Is 51:17 Jer 25: 15-17	Is 13:1-22 Is 21:9 Jer 51: 1-64			Is 66:15-16 Ezek 38:22 Ezek 39:6 Zeph 3:8 2 Thess 1:7
				REVELATION 14:8-20				
				REVELATION	16:12-21			
				R E V E L A T I O N				18:3-24

You will recall that an angel announced in chapter 14 that the hour of God’s Judgment had come (Revelation 14:7). He also announced that Babylon had fallen (Revelation 14:8) and that the people, who worship the beast and receive his mark, would be made to drink “*the wine of God’s fury*” out of “*the cup of his wrath*” (Revelation 14:9-10).

Revelation chapter 16 tells when it will be that Babylon will be given the “*the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his (God’s) wrath*” (Revelation 16:19). It will happen when Babylon falls and the cities of the nations collapse.

Revelation Chapter 18 speaks of Babylon’s being given “*a double portion from her own cup.*” That is to say, the destroyer will be destroyed. Chapter 18 also says that “Babylon” will in “*one hour*” be “*consumed by fire.*”

Such expressions as these link the three chapters together and indicate that they speak of the same events. The chapters help interpret each other.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN CHAPTERS 14, 16, 18, AND 19

Let us now expand our research to include Revelation 19. In order to point out the similarities between chapters 14,16,18 and 19, we focus on the code expressions (or pictures) of “a rod of iron,” “the supper of the Great God” “treading the winepress,” “the cup of the wrath of God,” “the fall of Babylon,” “the kings gathered for battle.” All of these word pictures (or code expressions) describe the last day.

When it says that the nations will be “devoured,” it is not necessarily speaking of the end of the nations; for although wicked people’s earthly bodies will be “devoured,” they will afterward be thrown into *the lake of fire*.

Revelation 19:11-21 contains language that ties it to earlier chapters. Here is a chart that indicates that the word pictures (or code expressions) about the reaping (harvesting) of the earth, which are used in chapters 14,16,18 and 19, are speaking about the same thing:

CODE EXPRESSIONS THAT IDENTIFY THE LAST DAY

Rod of iron	Supper of the great God	Reaping the earth	Treading the wine-press	Cup of the wrath of God	Fall of Babylon	Kings gathered for battle	Behold, I come like a thief	Fire from heaven
Ps 2:9 Rev 2:27 12:5	Ezek 39:17-18, 20	Jer 51:33 Joel 3:13 Mt 13:38-41	Is 63:1-4 Lam 1:15 Joel 3:13	Ps 60 3 Ps 75:8 Is 51:17 Jer 25:15-17	Is 13:22 Is 21:9 Jer 51:1-64	Exek 38:2-7 Ezek 39:1	Mt 24:42-43 1 Thess 5:2 2 Pet 3:10	Is 66:15-16 Ezek 38:22 Ezek 39:6 Zeph 3:8 2 Thess 1:7
		R E V E L A T I O N						
					14:8-20			
					R E V E L A T I O N			
						16:12-21		
					R E V E L A T I O N			
								18:3-24
R	E	V	E	L	A	T	I	O
N								
								19:11-21

Please notice about the above chart: The apostle John saw (as told in chapter 14) grapes being harvested and “*trampled in the winepress,*” which refers to the reaping (harvesting) of wicked people from the earth. Similarly, Revelation chapter 19 says that Jesus will tread the “*winepress of the wrath of the fury of God Almighty*” (Revelation 19:15). Jesus will do this after He has defeated the nations. The similarity of these thoughts leads one to think that the two chapters (14 and 19) speak of the same event.

Notice also that in chapter 16, the apostle John tells that he saw spirits of demons going out to the kings of the earth “*to gather them for battle*” (Revelation 16:14). Similarly, in Revelation chapter 19, John saw the kings “*gathered together to make war*” (Revelation 19:19) against the rider on the white horse and His army.

Does anyone think that the kings of the earth will make war on King Jesus twice? I think not. Once will suffice them. Such considerations lead us to think that also chapters 16 and 19 describe the same events.

HERE IS THE CHART AGAIN, WITH THE ADDITION OF REVELATION 20:7-11

The following chart shows the inter-relatedness of the five chapters of the book of Revelation that tell of the reaping (harvesting) of wicked people from the earth. That is to say, the chart shows that Revelation 20:7-11 is in line with the earlier sections of Revelation that describe the reaping (harvesting) of the earth. This indicates that the chapters are speaking about the same thing.

CODE WORDS THAT IDENTIFY THE LAST DAY

Rod of iron	Supper of the great God	Reaping the earth	Treading the wine-press	Cup of the wrath of God	Fall of Babylon	Kings gathered for battle	Behold, I come like a thief	Fire from heaven
Ps 2:9	Ezek 39: 17-18, 20	Jer 51:33 Joel 3:13 Mt 13:38-41	Is 63:1-4 Lam 1:15 Joel 3:13	Ps 60 3 Ps 75:8 Is 51:17 Jer 25: 15-17	Is 13:22 Is 21:9 Jer 51: 1-64	Exek 38: 2-7 Ezek 39: 1	Mt 24: 42-43 1 Thess 5:2 2 Pet 3: 10	Is 66:15-16 Ezek 38:22 Ezek 39:6 Zeph 3:8 2 Thess 1:7
		R E V E L A T I O N				14:8-20		
			R E V E L A T I O N			16:12-21		
				R E V E L A T I O N		18:3-24		
R E V E L A T I O N						19:11-21		
								REVELATION 20:7-11

Two expressions in Revelation chapter 20 that link it to previous chapters, are: “*kings...gathered for battle*” (Revelation 20:8) and “*fire falls from heaven*” (Revelation 20:9).

I conclude, therefore, that the events that are described in Revelation chapters 14,16,17,18,19 and 20 are interrelated. They are linked by code expressions (word pictures) that are taken (primarily) from the Old Testament.

This shows that a familiarity with the Bible as a whole helps a person to get at the meaning of the book of Revelation.

SUMMING UP

The story that is told by the SEALS, TRUMPETS and BOWLS spans human history from the time of the John the apostle to time when humans will be reaped (harvested) from the earth.

The reaping (harvesting) of the earth is one of the major last-day events. The Bible supplies some of the details about how it will happen, but it does not give as many details as one might like to have.

As we have already pointed out, the Bible gives very few clues as to the identity of horrible events that will take place. When these events start to take place, perhaps Bible-reading people will be able to point to them and say, "This may be what the TRUMPETS and the BOWLS are talking about." If they are able to do this, it should help them get some insight into how deeply they are into the final days of human history. Such insight might help them to follow the words of Jesus, when He said, "*When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.*" Luke 21:28 NIV

One of the reasons why Jesus revealed as much as He did about the future may have been to help Christians avoid being dismayed as they see the end approaching.

Jesus may also have wanted to assure His people that God is aware of what is happening on earth and that He will not allow wicked people to go unpunished.

Since the book of Revelation is composed largely of word pictures that are taken from the Old Testament, the parts of the Bible, which precede the book of Revelation, are enormously important in trying to understand the Revelation.

It is also true that the book of Revelation helps explain some of the earlier parts of the Bible.