APOCALYPSE 2017
PRELUDE. ST JOHN IS TAKEN TO PATMOS
PROLOGUE
I, your brother John, found myself on Patmos because I had preached God’s word and borne witness to Jesus Christ.
The Spirit came to me on the Lord’s day and I heard behind me a great voice like a trumpet, saying ‘Write what you see in a book, and send it to the seven churches.’
I turned to see whose voice had spoken and saw seven gold lampstands, and in their midst One like the son of man, in a long robe, with a golden belt round his breast.
His hair was white as snow-white wool, and his eyes like a flame, his feet like bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice like the sound of many waters.
In his right hand were seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the bright sun.
When I saw him I fell at his feet as if dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said:
‘Fear not: I am the first and the last, he that lives; I was dead, and behold! I am alive for ever and ever."
‘I have the keys of death and hell. Write down what you have seen, and what is, and what shall be.’
After this I looked, and behold! a door was opened in heaven, and the voice I had first heard, like a trumpet, said to me: ‘Come up here, and I shall show you what must happen after this time.’
At once, I was in the spirit, and I saw a throne in heaven, and on the throne was seated One, like jasper or ruby, and a rainbow round the throne like an emerald.
Round the throne stood twenty-four other thrones; on them sat twenty-four elders clothed in white, with golden crowns on their heads.
From the throne came lightning and thunder; seven fiery lamps burned before the throne; there lay, too, a sea of glass, like crystal.
In the midst of the throne and round it were four creatures, full of eyes, before and behind.
The first was like a lion, the second like a calf, the third had a man’s face and the fourth was like a flying eagle.
Each had six wings, and they were full of eyes. They never rest by day or night, but say ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and shall be.’
When they give glory, honour and thanks to the One seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, then the twenty-four elders bow down before the One on the throne
And worship him who lives for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ‘You are worthy Lord our God, to receive honour, glory and power because you made everything, and everything was made by your will.’
I saw in the right hand of the One on the throne a book, its pages written on both sides, but sealed with seven seals.
I saw a strong angel who cried loudly; ‘Who is worthy to open the book and undo the seals?’ But no man in heaven, on earth, or under the earth could open the book or look at it.
I wept bitterly, because no one was found worthy to open the book or look at it.
One of the elders told me, ‘Do not weep, for see, the Lion of Judah, of David’s line, has prevailed; he can open the book and undo the seven seals.’
And I saw that, in the midst of the throne and the four creatures and the elders, there stood a Lamb, with marks of sacrifice on him, and with seven horns and seven eyes.
He came and took the book from the right hand of the One on the throne. And then the creatures and the elders bowed low before the Lamb, and all of them had harps, and golden vials full of incense.
And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the book and open the seals. For you were sacrificed, and with your blood you bought us for God from every tribe and tongue, from every race and nation.
‘And you have made them a royal race of priests for our God, and they shall rule the earth.’
I looked, and heard the voices of many angels round the throne, the creatures and the elders, myriads upon myriads, thousands upon thousands, proclaiming with loud voices:
‘Worthy is the Lamb that was sacrificed to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory and blessing.’
And every creature in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and in the sea, all of them I heard crying:
‘To the One on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honour, glory and power, for ever and ever.’
And the four creatures said ‘Amen’, and the twenty-four elders bowed low and worshipped.
ACT ONE: OPENING THE SEVEN SEALS
I saw the Lamb open one of the seven seals and I heard one of the four creatures, with a voice like thunder, say ‘Come!’
And I saw a white horse, and the rider had a bow, and a crown was given him and he went out to conquer.
And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second creature say ‘Come!’
And another horse went out, a red one, and its rider was given the power to destroy peace and make people kill one another: and he was given a great sword.
When he opened the third seal,
I heard the third creature say ‘Come!’
And I saw a black horse, and the rider held a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice among the four creatures, saying ‘A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny, and do not spoil the oil and the wine.’
When he opened the fourth seal,
I heard the fourth creature say ‘Come!’
And I saw a pale horse, whose rider was Death, and Hell followed with him, and they were given power over a quarter of the earth, to kill by the sword, by hunger, by death and by wild beasts.
When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been killed for the word of God and for the witness they bore.
And they cried out with a loud voice saying ‘How long, true and holy Master, before you judge, and avenge our blood on those that still live on earth?’
Then each of them was given a white robe and they were told to rest for a time, till the number was complete of their fellow-servants and brothers who were also to be killed, as they themselves had been.
When he opened the sixth seal, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became as black as sackcloth, and the moon blood-red.
Then the stars in heaven fell to earth like unripe figs falling from the tree when a mighty wind shakes it. And the heavens vanished like a scroll being rolled up; and every mountain and island was moved from its place.
The kings of earth, the great, the commanders, the rich, the strong, and every man, free or slave, hid in caves or among mountain rocks.
They said to the mountains and rocks: ‘Fall on us, hide us from the One on the throne, and from the anger of the Lamb. For the great day of his anger has come and who shall be able to stand?’
When he opened the seventh seal, silence fell in heaven for about half an hour.
And I saw the seven angels which stood before God, and they were given seven trumpets.
ACT TWO: SOUNDING THE SEVEN TRUMPETS
Another angel came to the altar, with a golden censer. And much incense was given him, to offer with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne.
The smoke from the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose up before God from the angel’s hand.
And the angel filled the censer with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there came thunder, lightning, and an earthquake.
Then the seven angels with the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.
The first angel blew his trumpet: there followed hail and fire mixed with blood, falling on the earth. And a third of the earth burned, a third of all trees, and all the green grass.
The second angel blew his trumpet: what looked like a great mountain, flaming with fire, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea was turned to blood, a third of sea-creatures died, a third of ships were wrecked.
The third angel blew his trumpet: a great star like a blazing lamp fell from the sky, upon a third of all rivers and springs.
That star was called Wormwood and a third of all water became wormwood. Many died from drinking that bitter water.
The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so a third of their light went out, and a third of all light failed by day and by night.
As I looked I heard an eagle,
   flying through the midst of heaven,
   saying loudly, 'Woe, woe, woe to those
   who live on earth, because of the trumpets
   of the three angels which have yet to sound!'
Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet and I saw a star fall from heaven to earth, and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. He opened the pit and smoke rose from it, as from a great furnace, and darkened the sun and the air.
And from the smoke came locusts
and they were given the power of scorpions.
They were ordered not to harm the grass, or any plant or tree, but only people who did not have God’s seal on their foreheads.
These they were not to kill, but torment them for five months, making them suffer as if they had been stung by scorpions.
In those days men shall seek death but shall not find it; and desire to die, but death shall flee from them.
The locusts looked like horses, equipped for battle; they seemed to wear crowns of gold, their faces looked human, they had hair like women’s hair, and teeth like lions.
They had breastplates as hard as iron; the sound of their wings was like many chariots and horses rushing into battle. They had stinging tails like scorpions, this was how they could torment people for five months.
They have a king over them, the angel of the pit, called ‘Abaddon’ in Hebrew, but ‘Apollyon’ in Greek.
Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel:
‘Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.’
They were loosed; they had been waiting for this hour, this day, this month, this year, to kill one third of all humans.
Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet and there were great voices in heaven saying:
‘The kingdom of this world now belongs to our Lord and his Anointed One, and he shall reign for ever and ever.’
And the twenty-four elders sitting before God bowed low and worshipped God, saying:
‘We thank you, Lord God Almighty, who are, and were, and shall be, for you have assumed your great power, and become king.
‘The nations were angry, but your wrath has come, and the time for them to be judged, when you will reward your servants, the prophets, the saints, and all those small or great, who fear your name; and you will destroy those who destroy the earth.’
And God’s temple was opened in heaven and the ark of the covenant was seen there. And there was lightning and thunder, an earthquake, and violent hail.
ENTRACTE I

At this point, the visions granted to the saint became more turbulent and have been removed.

All you need to know is that there was much talk of the coming of two Beasts (one from the Land and one from the Sea, each with seven heads), who placed their marks on the foreheads of the men who worshipped them.
ACT THREE: POURING OUT THE SEVEN VIALS
I looked, and saw a white cloud and on it sat One, like the Son of Man, a golden crown on his head, in his hand a sharp sickle.
Another angel came out of the temple saying loudly to the One on the cloud: ‘Thrust in your sickle, and reap, for the harvest of earth is ready.’
And the One on the cloud thrust in his sickle and the earth was reaped.
Another angel came from the temple, also holding a sharp sickle.
And another angel came from the altar and he had power over fire; and he cried to the one with the sickle saying: ‘Use your sickle and gather the grapes, for earth’s grapes are ripe.’
Then the angel used his sickle and gathered the grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God’s anger.
The winepress was trodden outside the city and blood flowed out as high as the horses’ bridles, for sixteen hundred furlongs.
I saw another wonderful sign in heaven: seven angels with the seven last plagues, marking the end of God’s anger.
And I saw a sea, as if of glass and fire, and those that had defeated the beast, its image, its mark, and its number, stood on the sea holding the harps of God.
The seven angels with the seven plagues came from the temple, clothed in pure white linen, with golden girdles round their breasts.
One of the creatures gave the seven angels seven golden goblets, full of the anger of God who lives for ever and ever.
I heard a great voice from the temple say to the angels: ‘Go your ways and pour out the vials of God’s anger upon the earth.’
The first angel poured out his vial on the earth, and bad, painful sores grew on the men who bore the mark of the beast and worshipped its image.
The second angel poured out his vial on the sea and it became like the blood of a dead man, and everything in it died.
The third angel poured out his vial on to rivers and springs, and they turned to blood.
The fourth angel poured his vial on the sun, and was given the power to burn men with fire. And they were burnt, and cursed the name of God, who sent these plagues, and they did not repent and praise him.
The fifth angel poured his vial on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was filled with darkness; they gnawed their tongues in pain and cursed God and heaven because of their pains and sores, and did not repent.
The sixth angel poured his vial on the great river Euphrates. The water dried up, leaving the way clear for the kings of the east.
Then from the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet I saw three unclean spirits come out like frogs.
These are devilish spirits, doing miracles, which go to summon the kings of all the world to battle on Almighty God’s great day.
And they gathered together in a place called, in Hebrew, Armageddon.
The seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and a great voice came from the temple saying: ‘It is done.’
And there was thunder and lightning, and a great earthquake, the greatest ever seen.
ACT FOUR: DESTRUCTION OF THE GREAT CITY.
The great city was split in three and the cities of the nations fell. God remembered Babylon the great and made her drink the wine of his anger.
Every island vanished and no mountain could be seen.
Huge hailstones, weighing half a hundredweight, fell on men from the sky, and they cursed God because of this terrible plague of hail.
One of the seven angels with the vials came and spoke to me, saying:
‘Come here: I shall show you the verdict on the great whore, who sits above many waters. The kings of the earth fornicated with her and earth-dwellers are drunk on the wine of her fornication.’
So he carried me in spirit to the desert. I saw a woman on a scarlet beast, which was covered in blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.
The woman wore purple and scarlet, with gold, jewels, and pearls; she held a gold cup full of the filth of her fornications.
On her forehead was written a secret name: ‘Babylon the great, mother of whores and of the obscenities of the world.’
The angel said: ‘The waters you saw, where the whore sits, are peoples, crowds, races, and languages.
The woman you saw is that great city, that reigns over the kings of the earth.'
Then I saw another angel come down from heaven; he had great power and earth shone with his glory. He proclaimed in a mighty voice:
‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and become the home of demons, the prison for all unclean spirits and every unclean and loathsome bird.
‘For every nation has drunk the wine of God’s anger at her fornication. The kings of earth fornicated with her and merchants grew rich from her wantonness.’
I heard another voice from heaven, saying: ‘Come out of her, my people! Do not take part in her sins or share her plagues, for her sins reach to heaven, and God has not forgotten her wickedness.
‘Pay her back in her own coin, repay her double for her deeds. Give her a drink twice as strong as she mixed for you.
‘Give her a measure of torment and grief to match her pride and wantonness. For she says in her heart, “I am a queen, enthroned. I am no widow and shall see no sorrow.”
‘Therefore her plagues will come in one day: death, sorrow, and famine. And she will burn, for the Lord God who judges her is strong.
‘And earth’s kings, who fornicated with her and enjoyed her luxuries, will weep and wail when they see the smoke of her burning, standing far off in fear of her torment, saying:
“Alas, alas, great city of Babylon!
In a single hour your doom has come upon you!”
‘The merchants of the world will weep and mourn for her, for no one buys their goods any more: their gold, silver, jewels, pearls; fine linen, purple and scarlet cloth, silks;
‘fragrant wood, ivory, precious woods, bronze, iron, and marble;
‘cinnamon, spice, incense, unguents, frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour, wheat; beasts of burden, sheep, horses, chariots, slaves, and human lives.
“The fruit you lusted after is lost to you,” they will say. “You have lost everything rich and bright, and will never find it again.”
‘The merchants of all these goods, made rich by her, will stand far off in fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, saying:
‘Alas, alas, for that great city, clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, decked with gold, and jewels, and pearls. Such great riches, lost in a moment!’
‘All the sea-captains and travellers, sailors and all who traded by sea, stood far off and when they saw the smoke of her burning they asked: “Was there ever a city like this?”
“They threw dust on their heads, and weeping and wailing they cried: “Alas, alas, for that great city, where all who had ships grew rich from her wealth! In a single hour she has been laid waste.”
‘Heaven, rejoice over her, and you, saints, apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her.’
A mighty angel picked up a stone like a great millstone, and threw it in the sea, saying: ‘So shall Babylon the great city be thrown down and never be seen again.'
‘The sound of harpists, minstrels, flautists, trumpeters, shall be heard in you no more.
‘No craftsman of any craft will be found in you, nor the sound of mills be heard in you, no lamp will shine in you, no voice of bridegroom or bride be heard in you.
'For your merchants were the great of the earth and your sorcery deceived all nations.' And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, of all who had been killed on earth.
ENTRACTE II

Two chants.

(a) Commovisti, Domine, terram et conturbasti eam. (Tract, Sexagesima Sunday)

(b) Kyrie eleison. (Mass, De angelis)
ACT FIVE: SECOND COMING, MILLENNIUM, AND LAST JUDGEMENT
After that I heard the voices of many people in heaven, saying:
‘Alleluia! Salvation, glory, honour and power to our God, for his judgements are true and just. He judged the great whore who fouled the world with her fornication, and he avenged on her the blood of his servants.’
I heard a voice, as of a great crowd, or like many waters, or peals of thunder, saying:
‘Alleluia! The Lord God Almighty reigns! Let us be glad and honour him. The time has come for the wedding of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself, and is dressed in fine linen, bright and clean.’
The angel said to me, ‘Write this: Happy are they who are called to the wedding of the Lamb.’
I saw heaven opened wide and look! a white horse. Its rider’s name was Faithful and True, for he is just in judgement and in war.
His eyes blazed like fire, and on his head were many diadems. He had a name written, known only to him. He wore a garment dipped in blood and he was called: The Word of God.
The armies of heaven followed him, riding white horses, and clothed in fine linen, white and clean.
Out of his mouth came a sharp sword to strike the nations, for he will rule them with a rod of iron, and tread the winepress of the anger of Almighty God.
I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried with a loud voice to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven:
‘Come, gather for God’s great feast, to eat the flesh of kings and captains, of mighty men, of horses and their riders, the flesh of free men and slaves, of small and great.’
I saw the beast, and the kings of earth, and their armies, gathered for war against the rider of the horse and his army.
And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who worked miracles in its presence, to deceive those who received the mark of the beast, and worshipped its image. They were thrown alive into a lake of fire and sulphur.
The rest were killed by the sword that came out of the rider’s mouth, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.
I saw an angel come down from heaven holding the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain.
He seized the dragon, the old serpent, who is the Devil, the deceiver Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.
He threw him into the pit, and locked and sealed it over him, so he could not lead the nations astray for a thousand years. Then he will be released for a little while.
I saw thrones; and those who sat on them had the power of passing judgement. And I saw the souls of those who for their witness to Jesus and to God’s word were beheaded; they had not worshipped the beast or its image, nor received its mark on brow or hands.
They lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come back to life for a thousand years.
So this is the first resurrection. 
Blessed and holy are those who share in this. 
Over them the second death has no power. 
They shall be priests of God and of Christ 
and reign with him for the thousand years.
When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released, and will go out to lead the nations of the earth astray, and gather for battle the forces of Gog and Magog, as many in number as the sand of the sea.
They marched over the width of the land and besieged the stronghold of the saints, and the city God loves, but fire came down sent from heaven by God, and devoured them.
The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur, like the beast and the false prophet, to be tormented day and night, for ever and ever.
I saw a great white throne, and the One who sits on it. From his face, earth and heaven fled away, and there was no more place for them.
I saw the dead, small and great, standing before the throne; and the books were opened.
And another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by the things written in the books about what they had done.
The sea gave up its dead, and Death and Hell gave up the dead in their keeping, All were judged by what they had done. And Death and Hell were thrown into the lake of fire.
That is the second death. Whoever was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.
EPILOGUE: DESCENT OF THE NEW JERUSALEM
I saw a new heaven and a new earth: the first heaven and the first earth had vanished and there was no more sea.
I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, come down out of heaven from God, adorned like a bride for her husband. I heard a loud voice proclaim from heaven:
‘Look! God’s dwelling is among men! He will dwell among them, they will be his people, God himself will be with them.
‘He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no sorrow, no weeping or pain. For the first order of things has passed away.’
The One on the throne said: ‘See, I make all things new. Write it down, for these words are faithful and true.’
There came to me one of the seven angels, who took me in spirit to a high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, from God, and she possessed the glory of God.
The city’s light was like a precious stone, like jasper, crystal-clear. The great wall was high, and had twelve gates; at the gates, twelve angels; and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.
The city is square, its length equals its breadth. The angel measured it with a reed, it was twelve thousand furlongs, its length, breadth and height all being equal.
Its wall was one hundred and forty-four cubits high. The wall was built of jasper, the city of pure gold, gleaming like glass. The foundations of the walls were adorned with precious stones,
the first with jasper; the second with sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, onyx; the sixth, ruby; the seventh, peridot; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.
The twelve gates were twelve pearls – each gate was one pearl; the street of the city was gold, pure as transparent glass.
I saw no temple there, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.
The city did not need the sun or moon to shine there, for the glory of God made it bright, and the Lamb is its lamp.
The nations will walk about in its light and the kings of the earth bring it their glory and their honour. Its gates will always be open by day: and there will be no night there.
He showed me a river of life, crystal-bright, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It flowed down the middle of the street and a tree of life grew on each side, which gave twelve harvests, one for each month, and their leaves will heal the nations.
There will be no cursed thing there. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and have his name on their brows.
There will be no more night, nor will they need the light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will give them light, and they will reign for ever and ever.
FINIS
From the throne came lightning and thunder; seven fiery lamps burned before the throne; there lay, too, a sea of glass, like crystal.