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Frank W. Nelte

'THE HEAVENLY SIGNS' AND CHRIST'S SECOND COMING

There are many prophecies that refer to the second coming of Jesus Christ. The one section of Scripture that ties all the end-time events together more clearly than any other is the Book of Revelation, though even there we find some things that may still raise certain questions. The most basic and overall framework for end-time events that we have understood for many years, and which is revealed in this Book of Revelation, revolves around "the 7 Seals, the 7th of which is composed of the 7 Trumpets, the 7th of which is in turn made up of the 7 Last Plagues". 7 Seals ... 7 Trumpets ... 7 Last Plagues. Let's take a closer look at the 7 Seals.

THE 7 SEALS

In Revelation 6:1-2 we see that the 1st Seal involves "a rider on a white horse", which symbolised false religion going out and conquering, tied in with the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:5.

In Revelation 6:3-4 we see that the 2nd Seal involves "a rider on a red horse", which represented warfare, eventually culminating in great world wars, tied in with the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:6-7.

In Revelation 6:5-6 we see that the 3rd Seal involves "a rider on a black horse", which represented famines, eventually culminating in great worldwide famines, tied in with Jesus Christ's statement in Matthew 24:7.

In Revelation 6:7-8 we see that the 4th Seal involves "a rider on a pale horse", which represented plagues and pestilence resulting in the deaths of vast numbers of people, also tied in with Jesus Christ's statement in Matthew 24:7.

In Revelation 6:9-11 we see that the 5th Seal involves "those who were killed for the word of God", which refers to the time we know as "the great tribulation", addressed by Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:21-22.

In Revelation 6:12-16 we see that the 6th Seal involves signs in the heavens and major upheavals here on earth, something we have commonly referred to as "the heavenly signs". This Seal is also addressed by Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:29.

In Revelation 8:1-2 we see that the 7th Seal involves "7 Trumpets that will be blown", as well as the return of Jesus Christ and the first resurrection. This is referred to by Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:30-31.

Now in order to help us understand these things more clearly, we generally have a desire to place all these things into neat little charts. The charts may look very attractive and neat, but they also have certain limitations ... because sometimes we are forced to over-simplify some things in order to make them fit into our neat little charts (and I myself have made many of these "neat little charts" over the years). It is a bit frustrating if something cannot be limited and tied down to one specific location in our charts, isn't it? It is almost as if we expect GOD to have worked with "neat little charts" before finalizing all the details relating to the rundown of human history. And maybe God does indeed have some kind of "chart" for how matters will unfold ... but IF He does, I am convinced that there are any number of dimensions that God can incorporate into His chart that are virtually impossible for us to ever represent correctly in any chart we may devise.

So here is a point I feel is needful for us to keep in mind:

Any chart we may devise (even if it is only one we carry in our heads) is a tool to help us understand certain things. It is an attempt to represent complicated and intertwined events in a simplified way. But we need to beware that we do not place the cart (the chart?) in front of the horse. "The horse" is the events that will take place; and "the cart" is the charts about these events that we may draw up based on the descriptions God has recorded for us in the Bible. We need to be careful of becoming convinced that "our charts" are the correct thing, and that therefore everything else simply has to fit into those charts in some way. With every chart we make we should always be mindful of Isaiah 55:8, where God tells us: "For MY thoughts are not YOUR thoughts, neither are YOUR ways MY ways ...". Sometimes it MAY just be that some things don't fit as neatly and precisely into OUR charts as we would like to see.

Regarding these 7 Seals, let's notice the following things:

Had the actions of the 1st Seal (religious deception) come to an end when the 2nd Seal (warfare) started? NO! Religious deception has continued way beyond the start of the 2nd Seal.

Had the actions of the 2nd Seal come to an end when the 3rd Seal (famines) started? NO! Wars and military conflicts have continued way beyond the start of the 3rd Seal.

Had the actions of the 3rd Seal come to an end when the 4th Seal (plagues and pestilence) started? NO! Famines have continued way beyond the start of the 4th Seal.

Will the actions of the 4th Seal come to an end when the 5th Seal (great tribulation) starts? NO! Plagues and pestilence will continue to be problems throughout the period of the 5th Seal.

Will the 5th Seal have come to an end when the 6th Seal (heavenly signs) starts? NO! The great tribulation will continue beyond the start of the 6th Seal. The 5th Seal will only finish when Jesus Christ has returned and frees Israel out of captivity. [We'll examine Matthew 24:29 more closely later.]

Will the 6th Seal have come to an end when the 7th Seal STARTS? NO! There are MANY events that are a part of the 7th Seal ... the 7 Trumpets, Christ's return, the first resurrection, etc.. The events of the 6th Seal (i.e. various heavenly signs) will only finish when Jesus Christ has returned, which is some time AFTER the first events of the 7th Seal have taken place.

Let me state the above points in a different way.

RIGHT UP TO THE DAY ON WHICH JESUS CHRIST ACTUALLY RETURNS ...

A) The 1st Seal (religious deception) will still be going on in FULL FORCE!

B) The 2nd Seal (warfare) will also still be going on in FULL FORCE!

C) The 3rd Seal (famines) will also still be going on in FULL FORCE!

D) The 4th Seal (plagues, etc.) will also still be going on in FULL FORCE!

E) The 5th Seal (great tribulation) will also still be going on, though perhaps no longer "in FULL FORCE"? Perhaps Hosea 6:2 applies here, though IF God was already inferring in the days of Hosea (around 780 B.C.) that the tribulation would come to an end during "the 3rd year", it seems hard to understand why in the Book of Revelation (written almost 900 years later) there is still the emphasis on three-and-one-half years? That's like cutting off almost a third of a penalty BEFORE the penalty has

even been spelled out in full? And WHY refer to it as a three-and-one-half year penalty when it is in fact only about two-and-one-half years long? What would that say about OTHER periods of time that are prophesied to occur? This is why I personally do not believe that "in the third year" the tribulation starts to ease off for some of the enslaved people of Israel ... I believe the tribulation will only come to an end, for all who are in that tribulation, when Jesus Christ returns.

F) The 6th Seal (heavenly signs) will also still have MAJOR ACTIVITY!

G) The 7th Seal will still be going on with all 7 Trumpets having been blown already! But the 7th Seal will CONTINUE after Jesus Christ has returned until all 7 of the 7 Last Plagues have been poured out in His presence.

None of the activities of these 7 Seals will come to a complete end before Jesus Christ actually returns, though most of them may have passed their peaks of activity? It will take Jesus Christ to sort out and to resolve all of the problems created by these 7 Seals.

It is important to understand that when a new Seal is opened, it does NOT mean that all the activities relating to the previous Seal have come to an end! Not at all! To place the events pertaining to each Seal into a neat little box in our charts, in front of or behind other neat little boxes, is not an accurate representation of how these events will unfold.

Let's now take a closer look at the 6th Seal.

THE 6TH SEAL

This is recorded in Revelation 6:12-17. Let's notice all of the activities associated with this Seal.

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great EARTHQUAKE; and THE SUN became black as sackcloth of hair, and THE MOON became as blood; (Revelation 6:12 AV)

There is a very specific purpose for the things mentioned in this verse. The usual translations of this verse hide this purpose to some degree.

Three things are mentioned in this verse: "an earthquake", the sun not shining as usual, and the moon not being as bright as normally.

The Greek word here translated as "earthquake" is "SEISMOS", which literally means "A SHAKING"! Without doubt it is mostly used to refer to "a shaking of THE EARTH", which we would call "an earthquake". However, there is nothing inherent in the word "seismos" that has to automatically imply it must refer to "the earth". Thus we read in Matthew 8:24 ...

And, behold, there arose a great TEMPEST (Greek is SEISMOS) in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. (Matthew 8:24 AV)

The context of Matthew 8:24 shows that this was "a great storm" or "a shaking of the sea", without any kind of earthquake being involved here. The Greek noun "seismos" is formed from the verb "seio" which means "TO SHAKE". IF such "shaking" takes place on land, then we would call it "an earthquake", and IF such "shaking" takes place at sea, then we would call it "a great storm or tempest".

BUT SUCH "SHAKING" CAN EQUALLY WELL TAKE PLACE "IN THE HEAVENS"!

And when THAT is the case, then it is obviously totally wrong to attach the word "EARTH" to the word "shake" or "quake" (i.e. "EARTHquake"). So understand that the Greek word that is in the New Testament translated as "earthquake" does NOT IN ANY WAY automatically imply "earth"! It is when the context makes clear that the shaking takes place on earth, that THEN it is correct to translate this word as "earthquake". BUT when the context is NOT speaking about something taking place on earth, THEN we cannot automatically assume that it must be speaking about "an earthquake".

The point to consider is this:

The prophecies about the end-time in both, the Old Testament and the New Testament, clearly speak about "a shaking of THE HEAVENS". And in the New Testament Greek such shaking of the heavens is perfectly correctly described by the word "seismos".

Here are some such statements in the Old Testament:

Therefore I WILL SHAKE THE HEAVENS, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger. (Isaiah 13:13 AV)

The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and THE HEAVENS and the earth SHALL SHAKE: but the LORD *will be* the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. (Joel 3:16 AV)

For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it *is* a little while, and I WILL SHAKE THE HEAVENS, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry *land*; (Haggai 2:6 AV)

Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I WILL SHAKE THE HEAVENS and the earth; (Haggai 2:21 AV)

And here are some such statements in the New Testament:

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and THE POWERS OF THE HEAVENS SHALL BE SHAKEN: (Matthew 24:29 AV)

And the stars of heaven shall fall, and THE POWERS THAT ARE IN HEAVEN SHALL BE SHAKEN. (Mark 13:25 AV)

Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for THE POWERS OF HEAVEN SHALL BE SHAKEN. (Luke 21:26 AV)

A careful examination of these three Scriptures (Matt 24:29; Mark 13:25; Luke 21:26) shows quite clearly that in each case the following verse refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ as immediately following this "shaking". Now in Revelation 12:9 we see that Satan and his demons are "cast out of

heaven" BEFORE the great tribulation starts ... they are cast out of heaven at least three-and-one-half years, if not more, before the second coming of Jesus Christ. THEREFORE "the shaking of the POWERS of the heavens" is not a reference to Satan and the demons somehow "being shaken". The Bible refers to Satan being "cast out" or "thrown out" and as "falling from heaven", but it never refers to him as being "shaken". Similarly, Satan is referred to as "the prince of the power of THE AIR", but he is NEVER referred to as "the power OF HEAVEN"! Furthermore, "to be shaken" is NOT the same as "to be cast down".

Understand that the use of the verb "TO SHAKE" makes quite clear that this is speaking about literal shaking. God NEVER speaks about "shaking" Satan or the demons? WHY would God possibly want to "shake" Satan?? Do you think God has one of the angels take Satan by the scruff of the neck and SHAKE him? What purpose would such shaking serve? Would it be to get Satan's attention, or to get Satan to "straighten up"? It is RIDICULOUS to apply the verb "to shake" to something God would do to Satan. God doesn't just use words casually. When God says "shake" He really means "SHAKE" and He does not mean "cast down" or "throw down" or "fall down"! He really does mean "shake"! There is no way that the expression "I will SHAKE the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land" or the expression "the powers of heaven shall be SHAKEN" can possibly be references to Satan being dealt with by God.

So the point is this:

"The powers of heaven being shaken" refers to something that happens AFTER Satan has been cast out of heaven down to this earth, and also the Bible NEVER infers that Satan has any power "IN HEAVEN"! But the Bible does most emphatically refer to something other than Satan and the demons "being shaken".

I suspect that these Scriptures refer to a literal shaking up of the heavens ... a changing in the orbits of the earth and the other planets around our sun, and a change in the configurations of what we refer to as "the constellations of the stars". This means that from that day onwards NOBODY will ever be able to refer to any of the signs of the zodiac, because the relationships between all those different stars will be changed by this "shaking" of the powers of heaven ... you will simply not be able to find any of those signs in the night-sky thereafter.

In Genesis 1:16 God clearly stated that the sun and the moon were both "TO RULE".

And God made two great lights; the greater light TO RULE the day, and the lesser light TO RULE the night: *he made* the stars also. (Genesis 1:16 AV)

While in English the words "to rule" express a verb, this is in fact a translation of the Hebrew NOUN "memshalah". And in 2.Chronicles 32:9 this same noun is translated as "power".

After this did Sennacherib king of Assyria send his servants to Jerusalem, (but he *himself laid siege* against Lachish, and all HIS POWER with him,) unto Hezekiah king of Judah, and unto all Judah that *were* at Jerusalem, saying, (2 Chronicles 32:9 AV)

The noun "memshalah" means: dominion, rule, power, etc.. And so in Genesis 1:16 God clearly conferred some POWER to the sun and to the moon. The sun and the moon CONTROL how long each month is and how long each year is. [Technically it is the earth's movement around the sun that determines the length of a year, but that is really controlled by the sun's gravitational pull, coupled with the earth's distance from the sun, etc..] And the Scriptures we have looked at (Matthew 24:29, Mark

13:25 and Luke 21:26) refer to those powers being shaken. To me this infers a change in the annual cycle and a change in the cycle of the lunar months. Consider this: IF NOTHING CHANGES in the powers vested in the heavens, meaning those orbits continue unchanged, HAS THERE REALLY BEEN "A SHAKING"?? The changed orbits of the moon around the earth and of the earth around the sun will be THE PROOF that the powers of the heavens have indeed been shaken up.

So let's have another look at Revelation 6:12.

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great SHAKING (Greek seismos); and THE SUN became black as sackcloth of hair, and THE MOON became as blood; (Revelation 6:12 AV)

I have checked many different translations for this verse, and all of them say "a great EARTHQUAKE", but it is still a fact that the biblical Greek word used here (seismos) primarily means "a shaking, a commotion", even though it is commonly used to indicate "an earthquake". It is also a fact that the Bible very clearly makes repeated references to "a shaking" in the heavens.

Ignoring the reference to the shaking for the moment, the focus of this verse (Rev. 6:12) is on what happens IN THE SKY! The focus is on the sun and on the moon. In the next verse the focus is still on what happens in the sky! Notice ...

And THE STARS OF HEAVEN fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. (Revelation 6:13 AV)

And even in the following verse the focus is STILL on what happens IN THE SKY.

And THE HEAVEN DEPARTED AS A SCROLL when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (Revelation 6:14 AV)

It is only in the second half of this verse that the focus changes to what happens here on earth. So it seems fairly clear to me that the immediate focus of this 6th Seal is on what happens in the sky. That is why I suspect that Revelation 6:12 is not at all a reference to "an earthquake", but rather a reference to "A SHAKING OF THE POWERS OF THE HEAVENS (i.e. the powers vested in the sun and in the moon, etc.).

Notice again verse 13. The analogy drawn is that the sky, the universe, is like a fig tree, and all the heavenly bodies (stars, planets, comets) are like individual figs. In this analogy the fig tree being shaken implies the sky or the universe being shaken. Verse 13 does NOT imply the earth being shaken ... which is what "an EARTHquake" would imply.

Another clue is as follows:

Revelation 6:12 speaks about a great "SEISMOS", and the next verse speaks about the fig tree "being shaken" (Greek here is the verb "SEIO"). So IF we know what the verb "seio" in verse 13 refers to, THEN we can know that the noun "seismos" in the previous verse refers to the same thing. Correctly understanding the analogy in verse 13 again makes clear that the shaking in verse 12 must refer to "the heavens" and not to the earth.

As far as the expression "the stars of heaven fell unto the earth" in verse 13 is concerned, this is written

from the perspective of an observer here on earth. If we were to see numerous stars shoot across the sky and disappear over the horizon it would LOOK to us as if they were falling "unto the earth". It is obviously not speaking about real stars literally crashing into this planet, nor is it speaking about other planets striking this earth. While there are also other bodies in the sky --- "asteroids" (meaning "resembling a star") in a band between Mars and Jupiter, and they vary in size from over 500 miles in diameter to just a few miles in length, and also "comets" (the Latin "stella cometa" literally means "a hairy star" because of the "tails" comets display when they approach the sun), and also "meteors" (meaning "high in the air"), and perhaps some of these could conceivably be meant here? --- I doubt that this Scripture is speaking about them for the following reasons.

Consider the context of this whole event:

- 1) In verse 12 we have signs in the heavens.
- 2) In verse 13 we have "the stars falling unto the earth".
- 3) No fear is mentioned or indicated at this point.
- 4) In verse 14 we have the next event, when "heaven departs as a scroll" ... it opens up.
- 5) This indicates that the light of the sun again takes over, obscuring most if not all further movements amongst the stars.
- 6) Now, in verse 15, after the period of darkness is over and the sun is again visible and the heavens open up to reveal Christ's return, NOW we see fear and panic amongst all people.
- 7) Verse 16 then shows THE CAUSE of their fear. It is not meteorites or asteroids crashing to earth all around them. The cause of their fear is a vision of the returning Jesus Christ.
- 8) Verse 17 then concludes this section with a reference to the implications of Jesus Christ's return (I expect the two witnesses will have for some considerable time spelled out to the world what these implications are).
- 9) IF verse 13 was a reference to a literal bombardment of this earth by "stars" (i.e. asteroids and comets and meteorites), I would expect people to seek out shelters and caves BEFORE we reach the stage of "the heaven departing as a scroll".
- 10) To me the focus of the fear and the terror in verses 15-17 doesn't match with a situation of "stars" crashing to earth all around them. It just doesn't make sense for people to make the effort to go to the mountains and to then say to them: "FALL ON US" when at the same time meteorites are already crashing to earth all around them. When people say to mountains "fall on us", then those people KNOW THEY ARE GOING TO DIE! Why not just accept a quick and easy death from a crashing asteroid?
- 11) I don't think that God first "switches off all the lights" before sending vast numbers of meteorites crashing into the earth. Why would God want these bodies to crash into the earth in total worldwide darkness? [This is further explained below.]
- 12) The only purpose I can see for God at THIS point cutting off all light from the sun is to enable all of humanity around the world to at the exact same time LOOK OUT INTO THE NIGHT SKY and to witness what God is about to do.

I believe that THE REASON why God blots out the light of the sun and the moon at this point in time is

so that ALL HUMANITY CAN WITNESS THE RESTORATION OF THE 30-DAY LUNAR MONTH AND THE 360-DAY SOLAR YEAR! God will restore these cycles IMMEDIATELY BEFORE Jesus Christ's return. That is what "the heavenly signs" of the sixth seal of the Book of Revelation are all about.

"The powers of the heavens being shaken" refers to God restoring the perfect yearly cycle (i.e. 360 days exactly) and the perfect lunar monthly cycle (i.e. 30 days exactly).

You can certainly call this my speculation. But time will tell whether this is a correct understanding of the "heavenly signs" or not. I have no idea as to when this will take place, other than that it will immediately precede the return of Jesus Christ.

Anyway, this sixth seal CANNOT be a reference to Satan and the demons being cast to the earth, because for one thing that event must surely have happened earlier, before the start of the great tribulation, and furthermore the verb "to shake" is totally inappropriate for what God will do with Satan. These heavenly signs are also certainly LATER than the start of the great tribulation, before which Satan has to be cast to the earth.

I believe it is speaking about something FAR, FAR BIGGER than most of us have ever considered! Consider this:

By the sun becoming "black as sackcloth" it means that EVERY PLACE ON EARTH WILL EXPERIENCE NIGHT SIMULTANEOUSLY! For however long God chooses to continue this condition, it will be night time everywhere. This means that every place on earth will be able to observe this "shaking of the powers of heaven", this straightening out of the solar and lunar cycles at the very same time.

These heavenly signs are not just some meaningless display of power. God uses this event of restoring the "very good" cycles of the heavenly bodies as the fanfare that ushers in the greatest event in the history of this universe up to that point in time!

THEY USHER IN THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE RESURRECTION OF 144,000 HUMAN BEINGS WHO WILL HAVE BEEN CHANGED INTO SONS OF GOD! THEY USHER IN THE START OF "THE KINGDOM OF GOD" RULING THIS EARTH!

Let me put it like this:

We, all of humanity, will be sitting in the theatre watching God at work. So God darkens the whole room (therefore no sun and moon to shine anywhere) and then gives all of humanity ringside seats at witnessing what will almost seem like the original creation. When God then, in the darkened night-sky, sets about rearranging the entire universe, moving TRILLIONS of stars into new locations and new orbits, in addition to restoring the perfect cycles within our particular solar system, it will be the next best thing to having witnessed the original creation of this universe. It will be a mind-boggling event ... to humanity it will seem like the whole universe is coming to an end ... people will be scared out of their wits. I suggest that those of us who will be at the place of safety at that point in time go outside and WATCH THIS AWESOME DISPLAY OF THE POWER OF GOD!

I expect that God will suspend or override the limitation of the speed of light to give this witness to humanity. I present this speculation because, while we would be able to see comets and meteorites move across the sky, we would NOT be able to observe any movements of the REAL stars, since it takes the light from those stars many YEARS to reach our earth. So even if the stars were moving to new locations and to new orbits at the speed of light, it would still take years for all those results to come in. And I don't think that God has nothing other than a spectacular meteorite shower in mind ... that's just

on TOO SMALL A SCALE for what the Creator of all things will do to get humanity's attention!

No matter where people are on this earth, it will be night-time for them and they will be able to SEE stars whizzing across the sky in every direction ... scary for those who don't believe in an all-powerful God who controls with absolute precision the movements of every single one of those heavenly bodies. It is certainly going to be "a great shaking", probably the biggest shake-up since the time when Satan rebelled against God, at that time causing enormous destruction throughout the universe. This event, witnessed by all of humanity, will forever silence the fools (see Psalm 14:1, etc.) who believe in evolution's "big bang" theory. It will be an awesome display of the power and the majesty and the glory of the God who is about to return to this planet. This will provide the entry for the King of kings and the Lord of lords. This is the shaking all the prophecies in the Old Testament and in the New Testament refer to.

God is not a man who uses theatrical tricks to impress people. This display at Christ's return is REAL power, the kind of power that literally causes people to be "scared to DEATH" ... many will DIE of heart attacks as these things take place.

MEN'S HEARTS FAILING THEM FOR FEAR, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. (Luke 21:26 AV)

Are YOU ready for the ringside seat God is offering you? You can be one of the very few people on earth who can watch this whole display with absolute faith that God is controlling every single movement in the sky. EVERYTHING is under complete control. I suggest that it is going to be OUR equivalent of what Moses told Israel, when he said:

"FEAR YOU NOT, STAND STILL, AND SEE THE SALVATION OF THE ETERNAL!" (Exodus 14:13)

For us it will not be the Egyptian army; for us it will be the present configurations in the heavens with "the signs of the zodiac" that we will be told: "you shall see them again no more for ever".

That is the time the whole universe is actually WAITING FOR! Notice what Paul wrote in Romans.

For we know that THE WHOLE CREATION GROANETH AND TRAVAILETH IN PAIN TOGETHER UNTIL NOW. And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body. (Romans 8:22-23 AV)

Notice carefully.

THE TIME Paul is speaking about is when the first resurrection takes place. Figuratively speaking, the whole creation is waiting for that moment. WHY? Because that is the time when all the decay and damage caused by man's sins, and by Satan's sins before that, will be removed. This universe will not be made "new" at that point in time, but it will be "RESTORED" to the state it was in before any sin had entered the picture. It will be restored to the state that is ideal for PHYSICAL human beings. Had Adam and Eve not sinned and had Jesus Christ actually ruled over them ... THAT is the state to which this earth will be restored. Christ will rule under the exact conditions He had planned to have when He created Adam.

Notice also what Peter tells us in the Book of Acts.

And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive UNTIL THE TIMES OF RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:20-21 AV)

The word here translated as "restitution" refers to "RESTORING TO A FORMER STATE OR CONDITION". "Restored" does not mean "make NEW".

Let me try to make this very plain:

INITIALLY, when God created Adam and Eve as physical, mortal human beings, God had prepared this earth with its moon to be a suitable TRAINING GROUND for the process of building His Family, the Family of God. God had established PERFECT lunar cycles of exactly 30 days each, and PERFECT annual cycles of exactly 360 days each. God had provided an environment that would be PERFECT for physical human beings ... the plants, the animals, the scenery, the weather pattern, etc. ... it was NOT perfect for SPIRIT BEINGS to dwell in, but it was perfect for the purpose for which it had been created ... a "VERY GOOD" environment for physical beings who would need air and water and physical food to sustain their existence. It was God's intent that there would be only one language for all human beings. The universe, outside of our earth, may very possibly still have borne the scars of Satan's rebellion? I obviously don't know, but it seems highly unlikely to me that God had repaired the damage that Satan's rebellion had caused to the entire universe ... because God wasn't finished yet with Satan.

It was God's intention that Jesus Christ would rule over these human beings, teaching them God's ways and nurturing them towards that ultimate goal of changing them into sons of God. But before implementing that plan God TESTED Adam and Eve. They failed the test and chose Satan's way of life instead. As a consequence God implemented a vast range of penalties for our sinful ways of life ... God brought weeds and poisonous plants into existence, God changed the monthly and the annual cycles at some point, God created a whole range of different languages, sicknesses and diseases came into being, adverse weather conditions came into existence, at times God used earthquakes and volcanic eruptions and violent wind storms and floods and droughts to punish human sins, God divided the earth (Genesis 10:25), etc. ... and we human beings have continued to compound all of these penalties from God by our selfish and perverse ways of life.

When Adam and Eve had sinned, God determined that He would let man have 6000 years to try out his selfish ways, that man would for that period of time be "cut off from God", with the exception of those individuals that God would specifically select to teach and train during that 6000 year period. At the end of that period Jesus Christ would return to this earth and RULE just as He had intended to rule when He first created Adam.

Now here is the point!

No amount of rebellion by human beings, or even by Satan, can stop God from ruling under the EXACT conditions that He had initially INTENDED to rule under. Yes, God may have poured out any number of penalties that affect life on this earth because of our sins and our rebellious ways, BUT God will remove all of those things when Jesus Christ returns to take up His PERFECT rule, as He had originally intended to do. Jesus Christ will NOT rule under conditions that in any way reflect "a penalty" or "a setback" that man's sinful ways have incurred. Christ's perfect rule will not be marred by anything like that.

SO ...

ALL the accumulated penalties for our wrong conduct will be removed when Jesus Christ returns to establish the Government of God over this earth. EVERYTHING will be "RESTORED" to what God had originally intended. That includes this universe, which pagan religions have worshipped over the

millennia (signs of the zodiac, etc.). There will be NOTHING left to remind human beings of the pagan customs and rites and traditions that existed during the preceding 6000 years ... there will not even be WORDS in the new language to express those pagan customs (e.g. there will simply be no word in the new language that means "christmas" or "easter" or "saturnalia", etc.). Even the concept of "money" will become obsolete (see Isaiah 55:1).

THE PURPOSE for this restoration is to ensure that human beings will for those 1000 years experience the EXACT conditions, which God had intended to provide originally. THEREFORE Jesus Christ's millennial rule will start with a period of "restoring all things".

BUT THAT IS NOT THE SAME AS MAKING "ALL THINGS NEW"!

Not only this earth, but even this whole universe, was designed to provide a "very good" environment for mortal human beings. Our solar system seems to be towards "the edge" of our own galaxy, the Milky Way. Our distance from the sun is perfect for sustaining physical human life.

BUT WHEN THERE ARE NO MORE PHYSICAL HUMAN BEINGS TO GO THROUGH THE PROCESS TOWARDS BECOMING SPIRIT BEINGS, THEN THIS WHOLE "TRAINING GROUND" ENVIRONMENT WILL PASS AWAY AND BE REPLACED BY THE PERFECT ENVIRONMENT FOR THE IMMORTAL FAMILY OF GOD!

THEN God will create a NEW heaven and a NEW earth. THEN God will make "ALL THINGS NEW" (Revelation 21:5). That is when "the first heaven" and also "the first earth" will PASS AWAY (Revelation 21:1)! Do you grasp what this means? It means that THIS PLANET we are living on will cease to exist! It will be REPLACED by a "new earth"!

WHY?

Well, because God really right from the start intended this planet and this universe to be the place He would use to train and test human beings for the opportunity to become a part of His immortal Family, to live with Him for all future eternity.

But God does not choose the same environment for SPIRIT LIFE as He does for physical life.

Look very carefully at Revelation 21:1 ... how do YOU read it?

And I saw a new heaven and A NEW EARTH: for the first heaven and THE FIRST EARTH were PASSED AWAY; and there was no more sea. (Revelation 21:1 AV)

That's hard to believe when you have always been told that this earth will abide FOR EVER, isn't it? A question: which statement is correct ... Revelation 21:1 or Ecclesiastes 1:4? Will you believe that this present earth will PASS AWAY (Rev. 21:1), or will you believe that this present earth will abide FOR EVER (Ecc. 1:4)? Here is Ecclesiastes 1:4 ...

One generation passeth away, and *another* generation cometh: but THE EARTH ABIDETH FOR EVER. (Ecclesiastes 1:4 AV)

To me the answer to this question is very simple! Just look at the Hebrew word that is translated as "for ever" in Ecclesiastes 1:4 and the puzzle is solved.

The Hebrew word translated "for ever" is "OLAM" (also at times transliterated as "owlam"). Now here is how Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament defines this word:

"OLAM: what is hidden; specially hidden time, long; the beginning or end of which is either uncertain or else not defined; eternity, perpetuity.

1. It is used of time long past, antiquity, from a long time ago.
2. It more often refers to future time, in such a manner that what is called the "terminus ad quem" (Latin for "a final limiting point in time") is always defined from the nature of the thing itself." etc.

For us the English phrase "FOR EVER" means one thing and one thing only. For us there is no ambiguity in this phrase. We have several hundred thousand different words to choose from in the English language if we want to express something different from "for ever". In biblical Hebrew there are only about FIVE HUNDRED different root-words (or stems) from which the 5000 - 6000 words in biblical Hebrew have been formed. Realize that the entire language of biblical Hebrew is based on no more than 500 different root-words. That all by itself should make very obvious that MANY words in biblical Hebrew MUST have a considerable range of meanings when contrasted with our several hundred thousand different English words.

The Hebrew word "olam" is used 439 times throughout the Old Testament, and a careful examination of all of those instances makes absolutely clear, beyond any shadow of doubt, that it CANNOT ALWAYS be translated as "for ever"! Yes, IF you wanted to translate the English concept of "for ever" into biblical Hebrew, then you would certainly use the word "olam". BUT you would ALSO use the word "olam" in MANY, MANY circumstances when you don't really mean "for ever"; when you mean nothing other than "for a very long time", or when you mean "for as long as the age lasts", or when you mean "until we get to the as yet unclear ending", or when you mean "from the most ancient times", or when you mean "until we get to the limiting point", etc..

One illustration that comes to mind is the historical document that is known as the "SEDER OLAM", which presents a (somewhat flawed) chronology from Adam's creation to the second destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in the 130's A.D.. In this expression "Seder Olam" the word "olam" OBVIOUSLY does not mean "for ever", because the chronology STOPS in the 130's A.D., and it does not cover any time BEFORE Adam either! In this particular document the word "olam" means the time from Adam to the 130's A.D., that's all. Another example we have is when people in Old Testament times said words to this effect: "o king (or whoever) live FOR EVER (olam)..." they were not really implying "for ever", which every king would have realized was nothing but flattery; they were really only saying: "o king, may you have A LONG LIFE".

Consider also Psalm 102 ...

Of old hast thou laid the foundation of THE EARTH: and THE HEAVENS *are* the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, ALL OF THEM SHALL WAX OLD like a garment; AS A VESTURE SHALT THOU CHANGE THEM, and they shall be changed: (Psalm 102:25-26 AV)

Here we are told that the heavens and the earth shall "WAX OLD"! God is going to change them just like you CHANGE A SET OF CLOTHES! What do you do when you "change clothes"? Why, you take off one

set of clothes and you put on COMPLETELY DIFFERENT CLOTHES. These two verses also speak about the earth, the whole planet, waxing old and being exchanged for a new one. Ditto for the heavens. By the way, the Hebrew word here twice translated as "to change" is chalaph", and this verb is also used in Isaiah 2:18, where it is translated as "ABOLISH".

And the idols he shall utterly ABOLISH (Hebrew chalaph). (Isaiah 2:18 AV)

The meaning of this verse makes very clear that "change" in Psalm 102:26 can also mean "ABOLISH, GET RID OF", which is exactly what God will do with the idols. "Change" would obviously have been an incorrect translation of "chalaph" in Isaiah 2:18.

Notice also Isaiah 51:6 ...

Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for THE HEAVENS SHALL VANISH AWAY LIKE SMOKE, and THE EARTH SHALL WAX OLD LIKE A GARMENT, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. (Isaiah 51:6 AV)

The heavens will vanish away "like smoke". We all know what happens to smoke, right? It just disappears. And again we are told that the earth waxes old like a garment, implying that you need to get A NEW ONE to replace the old, worn-out one.

As far as "for ever" is concerned, look at Jonah 2:6 ...

I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me FOR EVER (Hebrew "olam"): yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God. (Jonah 2:6 AV)

Jonah was hardly in the big fish "FOR EVER"! It just felt like a very long time to Jonah ... and I am not in any way critical of Jonah here; being in the circumstances Jonah found himself in would have seemed like a very long time to any of us. But it should once again show that "olam" doesn't necessarily mean "for ever".

It is a mistake to impose OUR MEANING of the phrase "for ever" onto the Hebrew word "olam". In Ecclesiastes 1:4 (and also in Psalm 78:69 and in Psalm 104:5) it is not really correct to give the word "olam" our English meaning of "for ever".

Just look at what Solomon was actually saying in Ecclesiastes 1:4. Compared to human generations (a generation being anything from 25 years to 75 years?), the earth abides for a LOOOONG time! This verse presents a comparison between the length of time that two different things exist ... and the earth comes out on top by a long shot in this comparison. But that does not mean the earth has to exist "for ever".

Furthermore, when we are told in Revelation 21:1 ...

And I saw A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH: for the first heaven and the first earth WERE PASSED AWAY; and there was no more sea. (Revelation 21:1 AV)

... exactly WHAT do we think will happen? As the Apostle John was looking at the earth what happened? Did the earth just get "a new coat of polish" to make it NEW? What happened to the universe to make it "NEW"? Exactly what do you picture when John tells us that the first heaven and the first earth PASSED AWAY"? Does "a new coat of polish" or "a rearrangement of the present stars and the galaxies" amount to PASSING AWAY??

What it seems to me is going to happen is this:

This entire universe, including our earth, is going to vanish away. The molecules and the atoms that make up this entire universe are going to be changed back into pure "spirit of God", which is THE POWER that God uses, and this entire universe will vanish into nothing ... like smoke vanishing in the air. THEN God will in the same fashion create an entire NEW universe, which will include a NEW earth. Whether or not that will be the same size and composition as our present earth is really neither here nor there. But THEN God will transport a ready-made city, the NEW Jerusalem to this new planet "earth". The heavens and the earth will be NEW in exactly the same way that this city Jerusalem will be "NEW". None of those three "new" things will be "patch-up jobs" of what existed before.

Recall the principle Jesus Christ mentioned in Matthew 9:16 ...

NO MAN PUTTETH A PIECE OF NEW CLOTH UNTO AN OLD GARMENT, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. (Matthew 9:16 AV) (also Mark 2:21; Luke 5:36)

Surely God Himself ALSO applies this principle when He creates things? When this earth has "waxed old" God is not just going to "upgrade" this old planet with some "new motherboard and some extra RAM". That would conflict with the principle Jesus Christ was explaining here.

"THE NEW HEAVEN" is going to be a universe that will NEVER run down, it will NEVER "wax old". It will be the permanent living environment for the Family of God. There will be no evil in it anywhere, neither will there be any memory of evil. There will be no Satan in THAT universe. Whatever happens to him, Satan will be confined to some place OUTSIDE OF that new universe ... somewhere that fits the description "the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 1:13). The past will be as though "it had never been" ... just like Obadiah 1:16 says ...

For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and THEY SHALL BE AS THOUGH THEY HAD NOT BEEN. (Obadiah 1:16 AV)

Why will God do that?

God is a Creator by profession. And creating the perfect universe is an easy task for God. God created this entire present universe with the intention that it would be a training ground and would exist for only a limited period of time. The fact that this universe is running down should tell us this ... it would not be running down if that wasn't what God had intended. God's crowning achievement is going to be THE IMMORTAL FAMILY OF GOD that He is in the process of creating right now. Once God has achieved THAT goal, THEN He will "delete" (in computer terminology) the present universe and just as easily create a new one. The new universe will be created SPECIFICALLY for spirit beings to inhabit. It will not contain anything that had been a part of the previous "first" heaven. It will be "new from scratch". That's what Revelation 21:1 is trying to tell us.

It will also do one other thing: Every spirit being that is going to live for ever with God in that new heaven and new earth is going to WITNESS THE CREATION of what will be our permanent living environment. The angels had the privilege of witnessing the creation of the "first heaven" ... and they shouted for joy (Job 38:4-7) when they witnessed the creation of this "first earth". WE will be given the privilege to witness the creation of a BETTER heaven and earth ... will we also be shouting for joy together with the angels when we see that happen before our eyes?

But that's still a long way off. When Jesus Christ returns in the not too distant future, He will RESTORE all things, but He will not usher in any "new" heaven or any "new" earth.

So notice:

It is when Jesus Christ returns, not before then, that "all things" that have been damaged or downgraded or altered will be RESTORED TO THEIR FORMER STATE! This restoring will happen in two stages or two steps.

THE FIRST STEP involves restoring everything in outer space. That happens at the very time when Jesus Christ returns. It involves rearranging and repairing this universe to the way GOD had wanted it before Satan and mankind sinned. This will ALSO involve changing the earth's journey around the sun to EXACTLY 360 days, zero hours, zero minutes and zero seconds. It will restore "the perfect year" that God had established at Adam's creation, and which was certainly extant until past the days of Noah. This will also involve changing the moon's journey around the earth to (as viewed from here on earth) EXACTLY 30 days, zero hours, zero minutes and zero seconds. It will establish the perfect year which will consist of 12 perfect months with a solar eclipse at the start of every month and a lunar eclipse in the middle of every month. No complicated calendars will be needed.

THE SECOND STEP involves restoring everything here on earth! SOME of that restoring will take place at the very time when Jesus Christ returns (we'll look at Rev. 6:14 in a moment). But a great deal of the restoring of this earth will take place OVER A PERIOD OF TIME, starting with Christ's return. This will include changing the topography of this planet by removing most high mountains and most islands. It will include "healing" the water, the soil and the air human beings need to breathe. It will include reclaiming the deserts and building up the old waste places. It will include changing the natures of animals that are today "wild". It will include restoring one pure language for all of humanity to speak. It will include restoring a long lifespan for human beings. It will be a vast program of "restoring" things to the state God had intended.

Let's now continue with Revelation 6:14.

And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and EVERY MOUNTAIN AND ISLAND WERE MOVED OUT OF THEIR PLACES. (Revelation 6:14 AV)

"The heaven departed as a scroll ..." tells us that these heavenly signs are now coming to an end. The heavens again "open up", letting the light of the sun come through again. The second part of this verse shows that this "shaking" certainly ALSO affects the earth. We saw several Scriptures (e.g. Isaiah 13:13, Joel 3:16, Haggai 2:6, Haggai 2:21) that make clear that the earth is also going to be shaken at the same time when the heavens are shaken. We might also keep in mind that IF the shaking of the earth is intended to be taken literally (which I believe it is), THEN it follows that the shaking of the heavens is ALSO to be taken literally. When God says in Haggai 2:6 that "... I will shake the heavens, AND the earth, AND the sea, AND the dry land", it would be illogical to assume that, while the shaking of the earth and sea and dry land is meant literally, the shaking of the heavens is somehow only symbolical, supposedly referring to Satan being "thrown out" of heaven.

When you consider THE SCALE on which "the shaking" of the heavens will be done, THEN it should help us to also understand the magnitude to which this earth is going to be shaken. High mountains will be collapsed, the ocean beds will be raised, and islands "are moved" to join up with the continents. This will change most of the areas that were for one reason or another basically inaccessible and inhospitable to man, to becoming very easily accessible to all people. Islands cut people off from the rest of humanity; islands very easily create an "US" and "THEM" attitude ... we talk about people having an insular outlook. So there'll be no major islands and no major mountains left after this shaking of the earth. That is what Revelation 6:14 tells us.

Let's notice the next verse.

And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; (Revelation 6:15 AV)

As I have already mentioned, people who don't know that this is leading up to the return of Jesus Christ will be scared to death. Even the signs in the heavens aside, THESE EVENTS (when the mountains drop and the islands are joined to continental land masses) will pale into insignificance ANY earthquakes human beings have ever experienced. And it will be on a worldwide scale, with these things happening simultaneously in different parts of the world. So people will seek refuge in bomb shelters, in nuclear shelters and in natural caves. But the next verse reveals their GREATEST fear ...

And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from THE FACE OF HIM that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: (Revelation 6:16 AV)

People will have been told by the two witnesses that these things would happen and that then Jesus Christ will return to this earth. And they will SEE the returning Jesus Christ. Humanity is terrified at that stage and they are also irrational. As it is, the mountains all around them will ALREADY be falling down. When the mountains are "moved out of their places", then THAT is not a good time to be "IN the mountains". It IS the time of God's wrath. As the next verse says ...

For THE GREAT DAY OF HIS WRATH IS COME; and who shall be able to stand? (Revelation 6:17 AV)

This is the end of the discussion of the heavenly signs. This is then followed by the 7th Seal and the 7 Trumpets. I'm afraid that this doesn't fit very neatly into all the charts I myself have made over the years, BUT by this last verse for the heavenly signs we have actually proceeded in time PAST the first six of the 7 Trumpets ... Jesus Christ is in the process of returning.

I suspect that the opening of the 6th Seal starts certain events in the heavens. But I don't believe that all of these things then happen immediately. THE FOCUS in this discussion of the 6th Seal is really what happens AT THE END OF THE 6TH SEAL! By then the first 6 Trumpets have also already been blown. In four different passages (Rev. 6:12-17; Matt 24:29-30; Mark 13:24-26; and Luke 21:25-27) it is "these heavenly signs" that are mentioned as immediately preceding the return of Jesus Christ.

Let me try to make these things a bit plainer.

During the heavenly signs we see that mountains and islands are "moved out of their places" (Rev. 6:14). This implies a colossal earthquake, or rather multiple colossal earthquakes. Yet it is RIGHT AT

THE END, when the 7th Plague is poured out, that we see the greatest earthquake during man's time on this earth, and islands and mountains disappear (Rev. 16:20).

And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. (Revelation 16:20 AV)

I don't think there are two different occasions in the end-time events when "EVERY mountain and island" (Rev. 6:14) or "EVERY island and the mountains" (Rev. 16:20) flee or are moved out of their places. These two verses, one in the context of the 6th Seal and the other in the context of the 7th Plague, speak about the same things. Things like that tend to spoil my neat charts for the end-time ... it is very awkward to try to place the removal of islands and mountains into more than one slot on my chart. It makes me realize that my charts are probably inadequate and to some degree flawed. It also makes life for us designers of prophecy charts far more difficult and complicated.

But it DOES tie in with what I said earlier, that when a new Seal is opened this does NOT mean that the events of the previous Seal have been concluded. This is VERY easy to see for the first 4 of the 7 Seals, but it really also applies to the 5th and the 6th Seals ... they continue until after the 7th Seal has already been opened.

Now let's examine Matthew 24:29 more closely.

MATTHEW 24:29 EXAMINED

Let's pick up the context a few verses earlier. In verse 26 Jesus Christ tells us to not gullibly believe claims about His return.

Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is IN THE DESERT; go not forth: behold, *he is* IN THE SECRET CHAMBERS; believe *it* not. (Matthew 24:26 AV)

Here Jesus Christ warned us against two specific claims about His return. We are not to go out to the desert to seek Him and we are not to go out to some secret hiding place to seek Him ... because He is not going to be coming back to either of those two places.

It seems hard to believe that in our age ANYONE would actually believe the statement if I were to say to them: "Look, Jesus Christ has actually already returned and is currently biding His time in this specific desert area. Would you like to come out with me and see Him?" Surely more than 999 out of every 1000 people would think of me as a crackpot if I made that sort of approach to them? I cannot see ANYONE coming to me saying: "Behold, Jesus Christ is out in this desert", and somehow think there is even a glimmer of a chance that I might go out into the desert with him to meet with Jesus Christ. Such a direct assertion is just so unreal in our present world. The only possibility I see for this admonition from Jesus Christ (and it IS a very clear admonition!) to have any possible application is for someone trying to persuade me to go to "the desert" or to "some secret hiding place", NOT because Jesus Christ is already there (because NOBODY is going to believe THAT!), but TO PREPARE for Jesus Christ's return, because He (supposedly) WILL come to that place in the near future. Nobody can persuade me that Christ is ALREADY in one of these places, because all of us have known the next verse off by heart for decades; but someone MIGHT be able to persuade me to go to some place where Jesus Christ IS LIKELY TO COME TO IN THE NEAR FUTURE! That's the only possible application I can see for Jesus Christ's admonition in Matthew 24:26.

One lesson for me from this particular verse is this: Since Jesus Christ has here made clear that He is simply not going to return to "the desert", therefore it is equally useless for me to go out to the desert

ahead of His return, in the hope of expecting His return there.

In the next verse Jesus Christ makes clear what everyone in God's Church surely already knows about His second coming:

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. (Matthew 24:27 AV)

So we are now into the context of Jesus Christ's actual return. The next verse deals with another aspect pertaining to His return.

For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. (Matthew 24:28 AV)

While this verse is perhaps a bit obscure, I have generally understood it to be a reference to the believers at the time of Christ's second coming being gathered together in some specific location. Possibly there are some cryptic clues hidden in this verse? At any rate, Jesus Christ certainly chose to not identify any location in plain and clear terms. In view of His admonition two verses earlier, would such a place of gathering be "in a desert"? Hard to know. Perhaps?

The point about verse 28 is this:

The focus is still the actual time of Christ's return, with a group that is anticipating His return being gathered in what we have called "the place of safety", wherever that may be, right?

Now comes verse 29.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TRIBULATION OF THOSE DAYS shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: (Matthew 24:29 AV)

Here we have it! Tied together with Joel 2:31 it all seems so plain.

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, BEFORE the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. (Joel 2:31 AV)

With these two verses we feel we have all we need. Namely: the great tribulation is Seal #5, which comes BEFORE the heavenly signs which are Seal #6 (Matt. 24:29), and the heavenly signs come BEFORE the great and terrible day of the LORD which is Seal #7 (Joel 2:31). So Seal #5 comes and then concludes, then Seal #6 comes and concludes, and then Seal #7 follows.

There is just one little problem. And that is this: Matthew 24:30 is the verse that immediately follows Matthew 24:29. And Matthew 24:30 states ...

AND THEN SHALL APPEAR THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN IN HEAVEN: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and THEY SHALL SEE THE SON OF MAN COMING IN THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN WITH POWER AND GREAT GLORY. (Matthew 24:30 AV)

The subject of this verse 30 is the actual coming of Jesus Christ "with power and great glory". So the few verses preceding Matthew 24:29 focus on the actual return of Jesus Christ, and the two verses following Matthew 24:29 also focuses on the actual return of Jesus Christ.

You say: "So what? What's the problem?"

The point is this: Verse 30 implies very strongly that Jesus Christ's second coming follows hard on the heels of those heavenly signs. BUT if the heavenly signs have to supposedly be finished before Seal #7 can start, THEN there may well be anything up to ONE YEAR taken up by the first six of the 7 Trumpets (Trumpet #5 seems to require a full 5 months by itself; see Revelation 9:5). But Jesus Christ implied strongly that His return would immediately follow "the powers of the heavens being shaken". Verse 30 makes no provision for a gap of almost one year between the heavenly signs and Christ's second coming.

The point is this: Jesus Christ specifically referred to the heavenly signs in verse 29 to identify the time of His second coming. Verses 26-28 and also verses 30-31 all deal with the second coming. THE INTENT of Christ's statement in verse 29 was to help us pinpoint the second coming. That is why verse 31 focuses on the SEVENTH Trumpet, totally ignoring the first six Trumpets in this account. WHY would Jesus Christ possibly have ignored the first 6 Trumpets in this account, but led His listeners DIRECTLY from the heavenly signs to the day of His return?

The point is this: IF the tribulation is supposedly over when the heavenly signs take place, exactly what will Israel be doing? Will they suddenly start living in peace with plenty of food and good living circumstances? Exactly what do people mean when they claim that the tribulation may be "over" for parts of Israel even before Jesus Christ returns? Are those the parts of Israel that don't actually NEED Jesus Christ to release them from the bondage of the tribulation? Will they have almost a full year without being in the tribulation before Jesus Christ returns? Are they going to be SPARED from the 7 Trumpets and the 7 Plagues ... if they are no longer in the tribulation? Are they the one sector of human society for whom things will start to get better BEFORE Jesus Christ even returns?

Yes, I understand that the heavenly signs are mentioned as Seal #6, before Seal #7. And yes, I understand that Seal #7 includes 7 different Trumpets. But it seems to me that the heavenly signs are like the fanfare that announces the return of Jesus Christ, by first "dimming the lights" for the whole world (God "switching off" the sun and the moon for a period of time), and then letting ALL of humanity be a witness to God's AWESOME power in rearranging the entire universe and restoring to this earth a perfect lunar month of 30 days and a perfect solar year of 360 days ... and that is why Jesus Christ chose to highlight these heavenly signs as immediately preceding His return.

In all three gospel accounts of this incident in Christ's ministry (i.e. Matthew 24:29-30, Mark 13:24-26, and Luke 21:24-27) there is a very strong emphasis on THESE HEAVENLY SIGNS being the important event that ushers in the second coming of Christ. They are the introduction to Christ's return. So in future in my personal charts for end-time events I will somehow have to pencil in the heavenly signs going right up to the day of Christ's return. Perhaps my charts aren't nearly as important or as accurate as I used to think?

Perhaps this has helped to place the heavenly signs into a different perspective for you? While this may perhaps answer some questions, I realize that it no doubt also raises various other questions. Perhaps it will open another perspective to your thinking? And I certainly don't have all the answers either.

Anyway, don't underestimate the importance of the heavenly signs, not when they are the last thing Jesus Christ specifically mentioned as preceding His return. Those heavenly signs signal THE START of the restoration of all things.

