This is a physical difficulty, which may be left with  
God. But I conceive the apostle may be speaking of  
their all taking a definite direction downwards, as seen  
from the position occupied by Him in heaven. Can it  
refer to a copious fall of meteors, commonly called  
“falling stars”?  
 The heavens are rolled up as a scroll. How to render  
this into modern astronomical language is not easy.  
But I understand John’s meaning to be as follows.  
The nocturnal heaven decorated with stars is the parchment field unrolled. As manuscript rolls in general  
were coiled round one stick, and that held in the right  
hand, the rolling up would commence at the right side,  
and be continued towards the left, till the scroll  
was wound up. This would suppose, then, that the  
stars of the eastern region were first swept from their  
places, the sky there becoming a blank, and the unpeopling of the sky continuing till it reached the west.  
This, then, would be another view of the previous statement.  
 But are we to suppose that the heaven, as the  
result of the shaking, will be quite unfurnished of  
stars? No. For some remain during the fourth  
trumpet, viii. 12.  
 But its effects upon the earth are natural enough.  
It hurls mountains and islands—the mountains of the  
sea—from their places. Similar effects have occasionally  
followed such convulsions of nature. In the last great  
earthquake, the mightiest that ever shall be known,  
“Every island fled away, and mountains were not  
found” (xvi. 20).

15. “And the kings of the earth, and the great men (nobles),  
and the captains of thousands, and the rich men, and the mighty  
men, and every slave and freeman, hid themselves in the caves,  
and in the rocks of the mountains.”  
  
 Kings, nobles, the military officers, and men of