

The Tribulation: The Seals are Broken!

Revelation 6

I have something very special for you today. To present it I need you all to close your eyes while I count to 3 and on 3 open your eyes. So, close your eyes.

(Pastor vanishes)

OK, that is called a rapture drill. The word "rapture" is taken from the Latin "rapio" for the two words "caught up" used in:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."

Acts 1:11, "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

This return of Jesus and the being caught up or raptured is tied to the period of time called the Tribulation.

The next 13 chapters of the book of Revelation describe the 7-year period of time known as the Tribulation. This is the second major portion of this part of Revelation. In this section we will see 3 sets of 7 judgements unfold.

B. The Tribulation 6:1-18:24

Because the rapture is tied to the Tribulation, we should address it here. The big question people have regarding the Tribulation is when it will happen. Jesus said in:

Matt. 24:36, "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only."

Now, before we try to say when it will happen in light of no one really knowing I can only say, we don't know for certain. There are 4 options of when the rapture will happen.

The first is called the pre-trib view. Simply meaning that it happens at the very beginning of the

tribulation. This view is probably the most common view among Log Church members.

The second is called the post-trib view. Again, simply meaning that the rapture happens at the end of the 7-year tribulation.

The third is called the mid-trib view. This one believes the rapture will happen around the events at the middle of the tribulation.

The fourth view is called the pre-wrath view. This view believes that the rapture will happen anytime before the bowl judgements of Revelation 15. This view tends to hedge its bets in that it includes the pre and mid-trib timeframes in its loose timeframe of being before the bowl wrath judgements.

Bottom line is that at some point during the tribulation those who know Jesus, the church, Jesus' bride will be joined with the Bride Groom.

If you are following our outline, we are at:

B. The Tribulation 6:1-18:24

1. Seal & Trumpet Judgements 6:1-11:19

a. The first seal 6:1-2

Revelation 6:1-2, "I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" 2 I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest."

You will notice that John writes words like "I watched" and "When the lamb opened." These are eyewitness phrases of an event, not words used to form imagery. What John is describing are actual events and he uses words that he understands best to describe events almost indescribable.

Here the first horseman of the 4 horsemen has been released. You will notice that of the first 4 seals each one of the living creatures is acting as the spokesman and each of the horsemen are giving authority to execute a type of judgement.

This first horsemen is free to conquer. [This picture](#) shows us the 4 horsemen.

b. The second seal 6:3-4

Revelation 6:3-4, "When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" 4 Then another horse came out, a fiery red

one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword."

The word "large" here might better be translated as "great" as the word for sword isn't a long sword that one would use in war, it's more like a dagger. The concept here isn't the coming of world war 3, it is more like street warfare, person to person.

The idea is more like cities fighting among itself, neighbors fighting among each other, homes fighting among themselves. Chaos!

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c. The third seal 6:5-6

Revelation 6:5-6, "When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. 6 Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "Two pounds of wheat for a day's wages, and six pounds of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"

The 3rd horse, the black horse, is bringing incredible inflation. One of the factors in this inflation is the reduction in available goods. Imagine paying \$110

per loaf of bread. That is the basic equivalent of what is being described here.

It doesn't get much better.

d. The fourth seal 6:7-8

Revelation 6:7-8, "When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" 8 I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth."

The 4th horsemen is Death from the Greek word "Thanatos." OK for all Avengers geeks, Thanos.

Death takes the body and Hades is following death to claim the soul.

At this time $\frac{1}{4}$ of humanity, which is currently 8.115 Billion people, so we are talking about the death of 2.02875 Billion people by sword, famine and plague. One out of every four people. Look around this room, it would mean 60-65 people in this room would die if we are around during the 4th seal judgement.

Oh, I forgot one thing, the wild beasts are part of the killing. This isn't Hitchcocks "The Birds" or the movie "Day of the Animals."

The famine is so bad that the animals aren't being fed so they are having to find their own meal. How bad will it be for packs of dogs to join the killing? Not to mention the lions, tigers and bears, oh my, but this is not Dorothy's nightmare. This is the 4th seal judgement.

e. The fifth seal 6:9-11

Revelation 6:9-11, "When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. 10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" 11 Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been."

The fifth seal changes perspective towards a conversation around the throne. Here we see the

martyrs under the altar. These martyrs are seeking justice for their murders. Now watch God's response. God tells them to wait a little longer until the full number of martyrs are added to this group.

In Matthew 24:1-8 the disciple Matthew writes about the events of the first 4 seals. Then he says this:

Matt. 24:9, "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me."

This reflects the 5th seal judgement. 6 verses later Jesus refers to the abomination of desolation which happens at about the midpoint of the tribulation. So, we know that this persecution is happening early in the tribulation.

Many of these judgements, you can find many other passages in Scripture which discuss these judgements so there is no shortage of time that we could put into every little detail which is there for you to dig into deeper.

But let me go a little deeper with these martyrs under the altar. Who are they and why are they there? Are they martyrs from all ages or are they specifically martyrs from only the tribulation period?

Once the rapture takes place the bride of Christ is given to Jesus. In that moment, the church no longer exists on earth. The Holy Spirit is no longer on earth. People obviously still are coming to Christ as we will see next week, but the Holy Spirit is no longer sealing them as we have been sealed once the rapture takes place.

Some will point to this as proof of a post-trib rapture. The martyrs, if they are only ones from the tribulation, this would point towards a much earlier rapture of the church. See the complexity you can get into?

But here is the point, even though some of these details can get very complex, what is the lesson of this Scripture for us? What is John's message for us? Isn't it pretty simple? Be ready for Christ's coming for His bride. Are you ready? Have you chosen to follow Jesus with your whole life?

f. The sixth seal 6:12-17

Revelation 6:12-17, "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, 13 and the stars in the

sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. 14 The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

15 Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. 16 They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the lamb! 17 For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?"

So, what is John describing here? First, we know that the stars aren't falling. One star falling on earth would completely vaporize the earth even before it could get here. Remember, John knows stars as small specs of light in the sky, so we can safely assume that what John was seeing was small specs of light falling, burning ash maybe?

So, with a massive earthquake it would be logical to assume volcanoes are erupting and spewing ash and dust into the sky. We see the effect John describes with wildfires in Canada which gives us red sunsets and different effects with how we see the moon.

The atmosphere is so filled with debris that the sun looks black and the moon red. We have air quality issues with the fires, imagine what this event will do.

This is the first of 4 earthquakes we will see during the tribulation here in Revelation.

Notice what the prophet Joel says about these events.

Joel 2:31, "The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

Then again in:

Joel 3:14-16, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. 15 The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. 16 The Lord will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the heavens will tremble. But the Lord will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel."

Again, we see the consistency in Scripture and how various authors are telling the same, one story.

We have looked at 6 of the 7 seals so far. The 7th seal, just like the 7th trumpet judgement, will introduce the next 7 judgements. But before each there is an interlude in Revelation. Next week we will look at this first interlude.

Some commentators expect by this point of the tribulation that about 1/3 of the world's population has already died. That's 2.7 billion people! This is only the beginning. I think one other goal that God the Father has in giving us this vision of the future is that we can rejoice in knowing we have a greater hope in Him.

A by product of this hope is to feel for those who don't have that hope. The tribulation is something we shouldn't want our worst enemies to endure. How are we working to help others avoid this fate? How are we fulfilling the great commission by winning people to Jesus?