

2nd Coming of Christ

Session 4

The Seven Seals of the Book of Revelation

Warm-up Question: When you think of the future, what scares you the most?

The Scroll and the Lamb

When we read of the future as Christians, we sometimes forget that God is sovereign over the affairs of men, which means that He knows everything and that nothing happens to us as Christians that is outside of His control and His permissive will. Not all things that happen to us are God initiated; however. We don't have to look far in our world to see that evil sometimes reigns, seemingly unchecked by God. God permits some things but only for a time. Justice will eventually prevail and all things in the end will be brought into judgment. No matter how scary these things are that we read, we must remember that we are eternal creatures and this life is not the end. We are strangers and pilgrims (Hebrews 11:13) in this world and are being trained and prepared for the next.

In chapters six and seven of the Book of Revelation, we see a basic outline of events leading up to the Day of the Lord and the wrath of God being poured out. Later chapters in the Book of Revelation go into specific details on significant events concerning the End Times. Before we get to the scroll and the seals that are broken, we should get the context of what the scroll and seals represent. In chapters four and five of the Book of Revelation the scene is the throne room of God where all eyes are focused on a scroll with seven seals. The seals need to be broken to open the scroll. John the Apostle weeps because there was not found anyone worthy to open the scroll or even to look inside it (Revelation 5:4).

¹ Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" ³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵ Then

one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." ⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders (Revelation 5:1-6).

What do you think the scroll represents?

We are not told what the scroll represents, but whatever it is the scroll cannot be opened until all seven seals are broken. Some believe it represents the judgments of God, others believe it is a title deed to planet earth. Scripture is very clear that the Earth belongs to the Lord (Psalm 89:11) but it also says that a usurper, Satan, has gained control:

¹⁹ We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one (1John 5:19).

Why would Christ be called a lion, but also be seen as a lamb? (Revelation 5:5-6) Why is He proclaimed worthy to open the scroll? (Revelation 5:9-10).

Christ, through His death on the cross as an innocent substitute, has won a complete pardon for all that receive the gift of eternal life. He has purchased with His blood men and women from every tribe, language, people and nation out of Satan's slave market of sin. He is represented as a lamb, an innocent substitutionary sacrifice. The picture of Christ as a lamb would have been a powerful symbol of sacrifice to the people of John's day. Every year they would sacrifice a lamb at Passover, which would remind them of how the blood of the lamb upon their door caused them to be safe from death when they were in Egypt (Exodus 12:3; 12-13; 22-23). Like a lion, Christ is also seen as triumphant. He has overcome the enemy with His victorious death on the cross. He is seen as both the Lion and the Lamb, who by virtue of His sinless life and sacrificial death, is the only one found worthy to open the scroll.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Revelation 6).

¹ 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. ³ 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 men slay each other. To him was given a large sword. ⁵ 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, “A quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!” ⁷ 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. ⁹ 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 number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed. ¹² 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 late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. ¹⁴ The sky receded like a scroll, rolling 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 every slave and every free man 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 stand?” (Revelation 6:1-17).

We start with the horsemen being unleashed with the opening of the seals. With each of the first four seals being opened we see a horseman going forth, and each horseman brings with him an effect upon the earth. Even though we see the heavenly living creatures giving the orders, “Come!” I don’t believe that these effects are

initiated from heaven. It is as if the heavenly creatures are calling forth the horsemen when the seals are open, as divine allowance being given for mankind to reap what has been sown. The fifth seal as it is opened brings persecution on earth (Verse 9) of believers that have been faithful to their testimony as believers and to the Word of God. I do not believe that God initiates persecution of believers—He sometimes allows it, but He is not the initiator of it. It is not biblical to say that persecution of believers is something that God does. So if the opening of the fifth seal brings an effect on earth that is not initiated by God, why do we think that the first four are? I do not believe the seals to be the wrath of God, for God is not the author of persecution of His people. The saints are asking God as to how long must they wait before He avenges their blood (Revelation 6:10). This is not God pouring out His wrath but Satan using Antichrist to persecute the saints (Revelation 12:12). The Word of God **never** says that the first six seals are the wrath of God being poured out.

The seventh seal, however, seems different in intensity and content than the first six. Many things start happening all at once, When the seventh seal is opened there is a silence in heaven, which, in my mind, speaks of the awesomeness of what is about to take place, the wrath and judgment of God being poured out upon earth after the saints have been raptured. The first six seals are consequences of man’s bad stewardship of the planet and satanic involvement through his man, Antichrist, and his minions, that have their agenda of putting Antichrist at the head of a world government. Having given an overview of what takes place, let’s now look at the events behind each seal and the effect it has on the earth.

The First Seal is Broken

When the first seal is broken we are told of a rider on a white horse carrying a bow, but no mention of arrows. He is given a crown and he rides out as a conqueror bent on conquest. This sounds very similar to what we have already said about the Antichrist. The Antichrist mimics Christ, who at His coming will be seated on a white horse (Revelation 19:11). The symbolism of the rider being a conqueror, but having no arrows reminds us that he will be a peacemaker. He will be a conqueror through deception:

He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy

many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power (Daniel 8:25).

The most intense struggle which exists in the Middle East and affects world politics is the conflict between the Jews and Palestinians. At the crux of that struggle is the issue of ownership of Jerusalem. The Jewish people say that Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the Jewish nation, whereas the Palestinians want the eastern half of it (The pre-1967 border). It is another fact that the Temple Mount, where the temple once stood, has been under Muslim control since 1948 when King Abdullah of Jordan took that part of the city in the war with Israel. The Temple Mount is still in Muslim hands.

The Antichrist will make a peace treaty, which the prophet Daniel says will start a period of seven years where we will see this man setting up an “abomination of desolation,” an image of himself in the middle of the seven year period in the newly built temple in Jerusalem (Daniel 9:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:14). As we work through the seals, you will notice that the effects of the seven seals of the Book of Revelation are also the same as what Jesus said would happen in his talk with the twelve disciples on the Mount of Olives, known as the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24). This talk is an outline of the main events, whereas the Book of Revelation fills in more of the details. It might be helpful for you to have one finger in Matthew 24 and the other in Revelation chapter 6.

In Matthew 24, when the disciples asked Jesus, “what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” the first thing Jesus answered was:

“Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many (Matthew 24:4-5).

How has the world seen this phenomenon already? What names can you recall of people claiming to be God or Christ?

Leading up to and into the 70th week of Daniel, the world will see a number of people claiming that they are the Christ, the anointed one. The final manifestation of this will be that Antichrist himself will come with lies and deceit and will claim that he is the Christ, the one that the world has been waiting for to bring peace

and salvation! He will overcome nations and come to a throne over the ten nation confederacy (see the first sessions notes) by deceit, and proud boasts of what he will accomplish. Jesus said to the Jewish people, “I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him (John 5:43). If this passage does refer to Antichrist, it is entirely possible that the nation of Israel will buy into Antichrist’s lies that he will be the guarantor of a peace covenant and they can have their Temple rebuilt on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. He will be believed in and received as their savior until he proclaims himself as God and sets himself up as God in the Temple itself in the middle point of the seven year period (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Daniel 9:27).

The Second Seal is Broken

The breaking of the second seal brings a second horse, ⁴ Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other (Revelation 6:4). This obviously is talking about war. Flip back to the book of Matthew and read Jesus’ teaching of the disciples on the Mount of Olives:

⁶ You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom (Matthew 24:6-7).

It is possible that this is a war that we read about in the first session, when we talked about Antichrist gaining power in a 10 nation confederacy and we see three nations or leaders were brought into subjugation by him (Daniel 7:24). It is very likely that it is more than one war that takes place, for we read of wars, plural, and rumors of wars. It may also be the time when we read of a nation to the far north of Israel (Ezekiel 38:15, and 39:2, most commentators believe this nation to be Russia) allied with Persia (Iran), Libya and Turkey, as well as other nations that make an attack on Israel (read Ezekiel, chapters 38-39, this passage has not yet been fulfilled). This attack happens after a re-gathering of Jewish people from all nations back to the land of Israel (Ezekiel 38:7-9), an event that is happening in our day. There is no other day in history prior to the homecoming of the Jews and the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 when this could be fulfilled so perfectly. God has been gathering his people back to their land, which is another sign of the last days, and something that has to

happen before the end of the age. The state of Israel is made up of Jewish people from all nations, and Jews have returned to their homeland from all corners of the earth. We can see in this way, how the scene is being set in our day for events that the scriptures tell us are yet to come.

The Third Seal is Broken

⁵ 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, “A quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!” (Revelation 6:5-6).

The result of the wars in the beginning of the 7 year period, the 70th Week of Daniel, is that now famine begins to take hold on the earth. This could be the result of nuclear weapons being used with fallout spreading over fields destroying crops. It could also be the consequences of globalist control of food and raising the prices to manipulate and control other countries that are dependant on the West’s food supply and grain. The famine might also be the result of Antichrist’s seeking to force people to take the mark in order to use the grocery store to buy food. At the present time (May 2011), this writer has become aware that Hedge funds are buying up farmland as an investment against inflation as the value of the dollar decreases due to the debt problem of the USA. Whatever the cause, we are told that a day’s wages will only manage to buy enough food for the day for a small family. The pair of scales represents food being weighed and rationed. Barley was usually fed to animals and was low in nutrients hence the lower price of barley. In the Olivet discourse too, Matthew records Jesus saying that famines will follow the wars. He also adds that there will be earthquakes as well:

⁷ There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains (Matthew 24:7-8).

Notice that Jesus said in verse 6 (Matthew 24), when talking about wars, “Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.” He is letting us know that we are only in the beginning stages of what will happen (Verse 8). He calls these preceding years the beginning birth pains, likening this seven year period to the birth of a baby. When a woman’s time has come to give birth, the

birth pains start slowly at first and are further apart. The pain is not as intense. As the time progresses and the baby starts to come down the birth canal, the painful contractions come closer together and are much more severe. In the same way, the beginning stages of the seven year period are not so destructive to the planet as the later ones, and each mishap is further apart. The further into the seven year period we will get, the more we will see stronger birth pangs. As we get closer to the coming of Christ, the world is in the throes of hard labor. The destructive events are more painful and closer together.

The Fourth Seal is Broken

⁷ 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 (Revelation 6:7-8).

When the fourth seal is opened we see that pestilence or plague is accompanied by persecution. The passage states that some were killed by sword (Verse 8). We should not take that literally, the sword speaks of violent means. The color of the pale horse is significant, as the Greek word used here is the same root word from which we get the word *chlorophyll*; it describes the pale, ashen-green, pallor characteristic as that of a decomposing corpse. Its rider is named Death and we are told that permission is given (“They were given power,” Verse 8) for a fourth of the population of earth to be killed by sword, famine and plague, and by wild beasts. To be killed by sword sounds like persecution with people being hunted down and killed. Famine and plague also adds to the death of a quarter of the population. How can we explain wild beasts? How many wild beasts are left on planet earth even at the present time? The Greek word used is *thērion*, and although it is mostly used for animals, it could also be indicative of people who have let their inner beast nature dominate their lives to such a degree, that they are likened to wild beasts. When people who are dominated by selfish greed find themselves backed into a corner, they will act in a predatory way, out of a beast-like need for preservation, especially in a time of famine when men find it difficult to feed their families. Consider the two scriptures below that speak of men behaving like beasts:

I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous **beasts**—

men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords (Psalm 57:4).

But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute **beasts**, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like **beasts** they too will perish (2 Peter 2:12).

Paul in writing to the Corinthian church described what happened when he started the church in Ephesus, after teaching daily for two years in the discussion hall of Tyrannus—a terrible riot broke out with the whole city in uproar over his ministry from that place to the whole province of Asia (now a part a western Turkey). He describes it as fighting “wild beasts”:

If I fought **wild beasts** in Ephesus for merely human reasons...(1 Corinthians 15:32).

Jesus also talked about what happens on earth at this time of the fourth seal.

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. ¹⁰ At that time **many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other**, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but he who stands firm to the end will be saved (sōtēria translated saved here can also mean delivered). ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:9-14).

This persecution of the saint’s results in a powerful outpouring of the Spirit bringing about a great harvest of people being saved as the gospel is being preached in power. Men betraying each other sound like individuals that are depraved and giving full vent to the beast side of their nature, persecuting anyone that will not go along with Antichrist’s mark and his rule and reign. Let’s see what Jesus said will happen next:

¹⁵ “**So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation**,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. ¹⁸ Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. ¹⁹ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ²⁰ Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹

For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. ²² If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the **elect** those days will be shortened. ²³ At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴ For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles **to deceive even the elect—if that were possible**. ²⁵ See, I have told you ahead of time. ²⁶ “So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the desert,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷ For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:15-27).

In the above passage, Jesus gives an event that will happen that is accompanied with two warnings of what will follow.

What event does Jesus tell us to look out for? What warnings follow the event? Who are the people that should heed the warnings?

We are told in verse 24 that it is the “elect” that should be careful not to be deceived. Who are the elect? The elect of God are those who have been set apart for holy use, the saints. We thought that we chose Christ, but in reality He also chose you! This is one of the great mysteries of the faith. If you are a Christian, it is because you were chosen and given grace and favor by God even before you were born! You have been set apart from this world by God Himself:

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will (Ephesians 1:11).

⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will (Ephesians 1:4-5).

If you are a Christian, you are part of the elect of God, having been chosen and predestined by Him to be part of His true church, the called out ones.

I believe this warning (Matthew 24:15-27) to be spoken to Jewish believers in Jerusalem and Israel, but also to Gentile (non-Jews) believers all over the world that see the Abomination of Desolation (Daniel 9:27) on the

television news. Those who are in the city of Jerusalem are to get out of the city quickly. The warning concerns what happens after Antichrist seats himself in the temple proclaiming himself as God (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

This is the event that we spoke about in the second session, the seating of Antichrist in the Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus warns that at that point, (Matthew 24:21) there will be great distress (New International Version). The King James Version calls this phrase, “Great Tribulation.” The Greek word is *thlipsis*, which means to crush, press, compress, squeeze. Tribulation, trouble, affliction. *Thlipsis* conveys the picture of something being crushed, pressed, or squeezed as from a great weight. It is used to denote grievous physical affliction, or mental or spiritual distress. Luke, in his gospel, also states that men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world” (Luke 21:26). This Greek word, *thlipsis*, is used in a prophetic sense five times in the New Testament. I am indebted to the work of Marvin Rosenthal in his excellent book, *The PreWrath Rapture of the Church*, for the following thoughts:

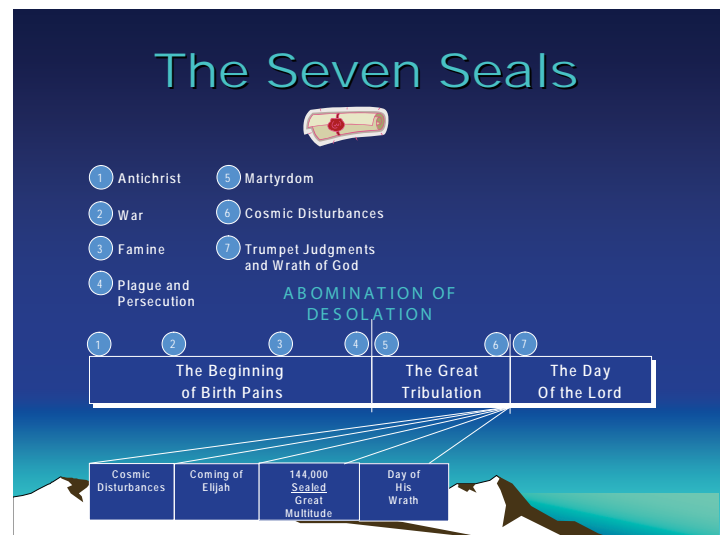
In His Olivet Discourse teaching, the Lord said, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). Two points are germane to this statement. First, the time of the tribulation of which the Lord speaks is directly related to the desecration of the temple (the abomination of desolation) and the warning to flee Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15-20). The desecration of the temple, it is widely agreed, occurs in the middle of Daniel’s seventieth week (Daniel 9:27; Revelation 12:6, 14), specifically, three and one half years into it. Second, the word tribulation in this text (Matthew 24:21) has the adjective “great” before it. Eight verses later He once again uses the word tribulation. He taught, “Immediately after the tribulation (distress NIV) of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light, and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken” (Matthew 24:29).¹

What are the clear events that Jesus speaks about happening chronologically? (Matthew 24:15-31).

Mark, in his gospel, also uses *thlipsis* in the same sense, he talks about “days of distress” (*thlipsis*) right after the abomination of desolation (Mark 13:14-19) and then warns us what will happen in those days, following that distress:

24 “But in those days, following that distress, “ ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; 25 the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ 26 “At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens (Mark 13:24-27).

The sequence of events according to Jesus is that a great distress (tribulation or persecution) breaks out against the saints. Right after that will be cosmic signs in the sky, the sun being darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars falling from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken (Mark 13:24-25). Then after the cosmic signs will be the rapture of the saints followed by judgment on those outside of Christ, the Day of the Lord.



Now let’s go back to Revelation to see if the rest of the seals line up with what Jesus taught in Matthew 24:

The Fifth Seal is Broken

⁹ 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 number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed (Revelation 6:9-11).

¹ Marvin Rosenthal, *The PreWrath Rapture of the Church*, Page 104, Published by Nelson.

Doesn't it sound similar to Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse, where a time of persecution, death and people being killed by the sword will come to pass just before the mid point of the seventieth week and will intensify after the Abomination of Desolation? The fifth seal ties in with the Great Tribulation or distress, where saints of God have been slain because of their stand for the Word of God and the testimony they have maintained. Notice during the fifth seal the saints are crying out for vengeance against Antichrist and his forces—these five seals have not been the wrath of God going on—it has been the wrath of Satan against God's elect because they are not conforming to Satan's desire to be worshiped!

In Revelation 12 we are given insight of Satan being cast down to the earth by Michael and his angels (12:6) and a war erupting against the elect of God, the saints:

“Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short...Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and **went off to make war** against the rest of her offspring—**those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus**” (Revelation 12:12, 17).

This is the war that we talked about in the first session, when we looked at Daniel's prophecy concerning the Antichrist, that he would be “waging war against the saints and defeating them (Daniel 7:21). This is not the wrath of God; this is the wrath of Satan against God's people. The day of the Lord, the wrath of God, hasn't started yet. That doesn't happen until the seventh seal is opened.

The Sixth Seal is Broken

¹² 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 late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. ¹⁴ The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place (Revelation 6:12-14).

Cosmic signs begin to happen at the sixth seal just as Jesus said in Matthew and Mark's gospel. I always wondered how the stars in the sky could fall to the earth but then I came across Isaiah's prophecy, which I believe ties in with what is happening at this point. Isaiah, under the inspiration of the Spirit, said:

¹⁹ The earth is broken up, **the earth is split asunder**, the earth is thoroughly shaken. ²⁰ **The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind**; so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls—never to rise again. ²¹ In that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below. ²² They will be herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished after many days. ²³ **The moon will be abashed, the sun ashamed**; for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders, gloriously (Isaiah 24:19-23).

If one was standing in the evening at any point on earth, looking to the horizon, the earth tottering on its axis would appear as if the stars were falling from the sky. What a terrible sight that would be! Jesus said that after the distress (thlipsis) of those days and the cosmic signs, He would send forth his angels and gather together His elect:

²⁹ **Immediately after the distress** of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. ³⁰ **At that time** the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, **and they will gather his elect** from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other (Matthew 24:29-31).

Isn't that exactly what we see in the Book of Revelation? We are clearly told that after the cosmic signs of Revelation 6:12-14, chapter seven begins with the words, “**After this**” (the this being the cosmic signs) the rapture takes place. We are specifically told of 144,000 Jewish people that are sealed. I presume this to mean that they have responded to the call of God and are included in the Church. I do not know if this is a symbolic number (12,000 x 12,000 equals 144,000), it is of note that the New Jerusalem that descends from above is: 12,000 stadia in length and 12,000 wide with walls that are 144 cubits thick (Revelation 21:16-17). I think God is reminding us that He has not forgotten the Jewish people that inherited the promises and the Word of God, and that He will fulfill all that He has spoken to them. Personally, I believe that He will bring a remnant of Jewish people through the fire of Antichrist's persecution to be included in His body, the Bride of Christ.

We are then told, after several cosmic signs at the open-

ing of the sixth seal, again in accordance with what Jesus is instructing his disciples on the Mount of Olives, that the angels would gather together the elect (every one that is born again of God) and they are all seen in heaven before the throne:

⁹ After this I looked and there before me was a **great multitude** that no one could count, **from every nation, tribe, people and language**, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb”. ¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying: “Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!” (Revelation 7:9-12).

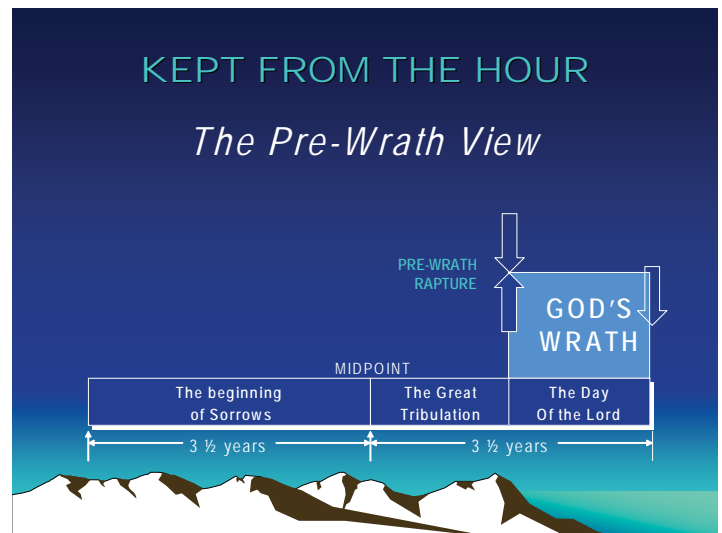
We are told that this great multitude was from every nation, tribe, people and language. Is this not the rapture and doesn't it tie in exactly to what Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse? Nowhere does it say that these 144,000 Jews were evangelists sent over the world to evangelize—I can't conceive of Antichrist letting 144,000 people travel across borders to reach this great multitude. None of these people will have a mark of the Beast upon them to enable them to travel.

Let's just **explore the thought that the rapture did occur before the seven year period** started. We would then have to come to the conclusion that those who were becoming Christians during the seven year period were allowed to come in to the body of believers (the Church) even though we have already established the fact that there is no second chance after the door of salvation is shut at the catching up of God's people (Luke 13:23-28). If there were two sets of believers, one raptured before the seven year period and those saved during it, why don't we then see the pre-tribulation believers welcoming those arriving into heaven after having gone through the Great Tribulation? We read of the angels, the elders, and the four living creatures standing around the throne, and God Himself with them. Why, if there was a pre-tribulation rapture, do we not see them welcoming those believers that have gone through the Great Tribulation, if there was such a thing? (Revelation 7:9-14).

Instead we see those that have gone through the Great

Tribulation (Distress, NIV) getting the opportunity to serve God day and night in His temple, and that God will spread his tent over them (a picture of marriage, Ruth 3:9), and wipe away their tears (Revelation 7:13-17).

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?” ¹⁴ I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore, “they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. ¹⁶ Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 7:13-17).



In the diagram above, I had to put the arrow symbolizing the rapture somewhere, but no man knows the day nor the hour that He will come for His saints. We don't know at what stage in the second half of the seven year period will be the rapture.

I believe with all my heart that we will all appear at one time before the throne. There are not two raptures, one before the seven year period and one at the sixth seal. Those of us who are here at that time will go through a time of trial of our faith and come out as gold tried by fire (1 Peter 1:7), with robes made white. We will be made spotless and without blame before our God and He Himself will wipe away our tears (Revelation 21:4). Even so, come Lord Jesus!

Prayer: Father, I thank you that you have chosen me and called me your child. Whatever trials I may go through, please give me your enabling power and grace that I may glorify you with every decision I make. Please mold and shape my character to be all that you want me to be. Amen.

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