

## 7. The pouring out of God's wrath during the Great Tribulation

During the Great Tribulation, God will execute His divine judgment upon the earth and its inhabitants in an unprecedented way. This will take place through a series of judgments that begin at the start of the Tribulation and progressively become more severe by the end of that period of time.

God will carry out these judgments on mankind for several reasons: man's egregious sins, his defiant attitude toward God, and his persecution of Israel and believers (Isa. 13:11-13; 26:20-21; Rev. 19:2). The result of these judgments will bring about extraordinary suffering for a God-rejecting world.

There are five major judgments during the Tribulation. The first three are unpacked chronologically in sets of sevens: the seven seal judgments, the seven trumpet judgments, and the seven bowl judgements. The last two judgments will be unleashed on the religious and commercial harlot, Babylon the Great.

One other characteristic of these judgments is that God's angels will be active in the execution of them. As they do the work of God in executing the judgments, we will come to see the incredible power, authority and intelligence these angels possess.

With this as a brief introduction we will now look at each of these judgments in more detail.

### a. The seven seal judgements (Rev. 6:1-17; 8:1)

#### i. *The first seal (6:1-2): The rider on a white horse - \_\_\_\_\_*

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The opening of the first seal signals the start of the Great Tribulation by releasing a counterfeit Christ who will be allowed to conquer the world (Rev. 1-2).

To discover the counterfeit, all we have to do is look at the original and compare them. In this case we are comparing the antichrist to Jesus Christ. When we compare Revelation 6:1-2 to Revelation 19:11-16, it is easy to see that the person coming on a white horse in chapter six is not the same person as in chapter nineteen, although there are some similarities.

Secondly, the person on the white horse in chapter six is coming forward at the command of one of the four living creatures, an angel. Jesus is never commanded by

anyone to do anything. He is His own sovereign and takes commands from no one. What we have in chapter six is a person pretending to look like Christ but isn't Him. This person is a false christ and is doing just what Jesus warned His disciples about in Matthew 24:4-5, 23-27: "*Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.*"

Most likely, the person coming forward in Revelation six is the Antichrist at the beginning of the Tribulation. There are a few things we should notice in verse two about this person that gives us reasons to believe this:

- *First, he has a bow but no \_\_\_\_\_.* A bow is normally associated with a warrior. The absence of arrows indicates that he will not do his conquering by the force of a weaponized army but by peaceful means, most likely through political maneuvering, which will bring about worldwide peace. This worldwide peace is indicated by the opening of the second seal judgement, which removes the peace the antichrist has brought about (Rev. 6:4).
- *Second, he has a crown, but it is not a \_\_\_\_\_ crown.* The person on the white horse has one crown, a (Gk.) "*stephanos,*" a wreath-crown, not a (Gk.) "*diadem,*" which is a royal crown. The wreath-crown is a crown of victory indicating that He will indeed be a victorious conqueror but he is not of royal standing, such as Jesus.
- *Third, he has been given the authority to conquer by \_\_\_\_\_ decree, not by his own authority.* This indicates this person has divine boundaries and limits to what he can and cannot do.

If these things point to the Antichrist (and it seems highly likely they do), it points out the incredible persuasiveness and influence he will have over the entire world when he appears. It is important to know that he will not expose himself like the creature in the movie *Predator*, a freakish-looking beast that takes pleasure in hunting down and killing humans. The Antichrist will be more like a rock star that the world falls in love with—something along the lines of Michael Jackson's

worldwide popularity. With today's technology, this kind of fame can come to a person almost instantaneously. In any case, it is not hard to imagine how the Antichrist, empowered by Satan, could conquer the world at just the right moment in human history by presenting a man that looks like a savior. It has happened before with men like Hitler, Mussolini, Fidel Castro and others who came on the stage of human history at just the right moment to present themselves as a savior but end up being an evil tyrant. The breaking of the first seal judgment will expose the world to the most evil man in human history. He will pretend to be like Jesus but will actually be possessed by Satan and motivated to destroy Christ and His followers.

**ii. *The second seal (6:3-4): The rider on a red horse - \_\_\_\_\_***

In this judgment, God removes the peace that the first seal brought into play through the antichrist. The red horse represents the blood that will be spilled during this time of war on the earth. According to Matthew 24:6-7, these wars will take place between nations and kingdoms, meaning that no group of people will be exempt from war or the threat of war during this time.

**iii. *The third seal (6:5-6): The rider on a black horse - \_\_\_\_\_***

This seal speaks to the worldwide famine that will be the result of the aftermath of wars due to the opening of the second seal. Jesus prophesied there would be famines during the tribulation (Matt. 24:7; Luke 21:11). In Lamentation 4:8-9, starvation is pictured as blacker than soot, thus the black horses' connection to starvation. The scales mentioned in these verses speak to the rationing of food. Also, the cost of food during this time will be highly inflated due to the law of supply and demand. A quart of wheat or three quarts of barley is enough for one day's ration. The cost of wheat and barley will be a "denarius," the equivalent to one day's labor. Thus, most people will have a day-to-day existence.

**iv. *The fourth seal (6:7-8): The rider on an ashen horse - \_\_\_\_\_ comes to 1/4 of the earth***

The color of the horse that delivers this fourth judgment is ashen, which pictures what a dead body looks like. This seal represents the hideously profound results of the wars, famines, disease, and the animal kingdom that will kill mankind. One quarter of the earth's population will die when the fourth seal is opened.

v. ***The fifth seal (6:9-11): The early martyrs - calling for God's \_\_\_\_\_***

This seal reveals the cost many believers will have to pay for their faith in Christ. Jesus spoke directly to this issue in Matt. 24:9-10, "*Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. 10 "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another."* During this period of time, people will live in tremendous fear of the state.

The social atmosphere at this time will be something like that of Russia during the 1917 revolution, or the communist takeover of China in the 1940's, and the Nazi takeover of Germany (1930-1940). One of the main ways these regimes were able to take control of an entire nation was by pitting one group against another by using propaganda that demonized those that were a perceived threat to the state. Then using extreme physical force, the new regime would make examples of anyone that would dare stand against them. By that time people would be in fear for their own lives or they would believe the lies of the new regime, and in either case they became informants that turned in their family and friends who resisted the new regime.

When the fifth seal is opened, the undesirables at that time will be the nation of Israel (Jews) and all those who placed their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. The martyrs mentioned in this passage represent the people who come to faith in Christ in the early part of the Tribulation. There are some interesting facts about these martyrs we can extract from vv.9-11:

- They were in \_\_\_\_\_ - their faith in Christ saved them from the second death.
- They had a \_\_\_\_\_ of what had happened to them - their past was not wiped out.
- They wanted their deaths judged and \_\_\_\_\_ - they possessed a sense of justice after death.

- They were given white \_\_\_\_\_ - the white robes symbolize being washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:9, 13-14).
- They were told to “*rest*” until other \_\_\_\_\_ were martyred - their rest came from knowing that God had a plan and was executing it in His time. God is in control of one’s life both on earth and in heaven.

vi. *The sixth seal (6:12-17): The natural world - planetary \_\_\_\_\_ and*

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The breaking of this seal brings the most prolific natural disasters in human history. In vv.12-17 we find six specific disasters that arise out of the natural world:

- **There will be “*great earthquakes*”** - the Greek word for “great” is “megas” from which we get our English word “mega.” These earthquakes will be on a scale the world has never seen before. The world is going to be violently rocked back-and-forth by God.
- **The sun will become black** - it is described as “*sackcloth made of hair.*” This kind of sackcloth was used to make sacks and strainers. Biblically, sackcloth was a symbol of mourning. So the point is this: when the sun goes dark the whole world will go into a dark mourning. In Exodus 10:21, the ninth plague that God brought upon Egypt was darkness. God described this darkness as something so dark it could be “*felt.*”
- **The moon will be like blood** - the darkened sun will have a bearing on the moon. At that time it will take on a color that will resemble the dark redness of blood.
- **Stars will fall to the earth** - this is not referring to literal stars as we know them, like the sun is a star. These are meteors that will shower the earth on a scale that has never been seen before. John describes them “...*as a fig tree casts unripe figs when shaken by a great wind*” (v.13). You will notice, “*unripe figs*” are spoken of. Ripe fruit is soft and easily plucked from the tree. It is when the fruit is unripened that it is the hardest to pull from the

tree. Also, when the fruit is unripe it tends to be the hardest; therefore, when the meteors fall, it is going to be a savagely dangerous experience. **When I think of this, what comes to my mind is when the tractors go into the almond orchards for harvest. The tractors grab a hold of the tree trunk and shake it with great power causing the almonds to fall to the ground like rain drops falling in a great storm.**

- **The sky will split apart like a scroll** - the picture here is of one long piece of paper with two ends that roll to the middle. When the scroll is opened, the ends are pushed away from each other to expose what is written on the inside of the scroll. With the aftermath of mega earthquakes, the sun darkened, the moon looking like blood, and meteors falling from the sky, it doesn't take much of an imagination to realize the earth's atmosphere will be profoundly impacted. When people look up to see the sky unfold in a supernatural way, it will frighten them to the bone. **The nearest thing I can picture this too is the skies in Nebraska in the spring time and early summer, tornado season. There are times when the atmosphere changes so rapidly from a sunny day to dark one, with threatening clouds that fill the sky full of wind, rain and hail. When a tornado is threatening, you can see the clouds move in sync with one another as they began to form the twister. It is a very foreboding and fearful thing to see the sky act like this.**
- **The mountains and islands will be moved from their present location** - the word "*moved*" comes from a Greek word from which we get our English word "*kinetic*," such as in kinetic energy. This speaks of the energy of motion. The earth is going to be put into motion with such extreme energy, it will displace "*every*" mountain and island on the planet. One can only wonder what will happen to places like the Hawaiian Islands or Mount Everest. The necessary power that is going to be unleashed to do this damage is going to be so tremendous that we cannot even imagine it today. It will take an exertion of God's power to do this sort of thing.

The net result of these disasters is that every class of humanity will be affected. People will be absolutely terrified when these things come upon them. Their only

perceived hope of surviving will be to hide themselves under the earth because it is not safe to be on the earth (v.15). Also, there will be an acute awareness at that time that these natural disasters are evidence of God's presence and are the direct result of His Son's wrath, which causes men to hide from Them (vv.16-17).

It is amazing that men can be so aware of God's presence and anger and have no desire to repent of their sins and run to Him as a shelter. It goes to show the stubborn callousness of man's heart toward God and how he is so unable to save himself from the wrath of God.

**vii. The seventh seal (8:1): The silence in heaven - the \_\_\_\_\_ of the storm**

This is the calm while in the storm. **When we think of a great hurricane viewed from a satellite, we can see what is called the eye of the storm. There, in the middle of terrific upheaval there is a place of calm and eerie silence as the storm is all around.**

This sort of thing is what is being described for us when the seventh seal is opened in Rev.8:1. The silence is a pause of reverence for the bitter judgments that are to follow, which are the trumpet and bowl judgments.

The seventh seal judgment is an interesting one from this standpoint: within it contains both the trumpet and bowl judgments. So, the seventh seal judgment is two more series of judgements; thus you can see why there was a silence in heaven when it was opened. As we will see, these next two series of judgments will be some of the most terrifying things that will take place during the Great Tribulation.