

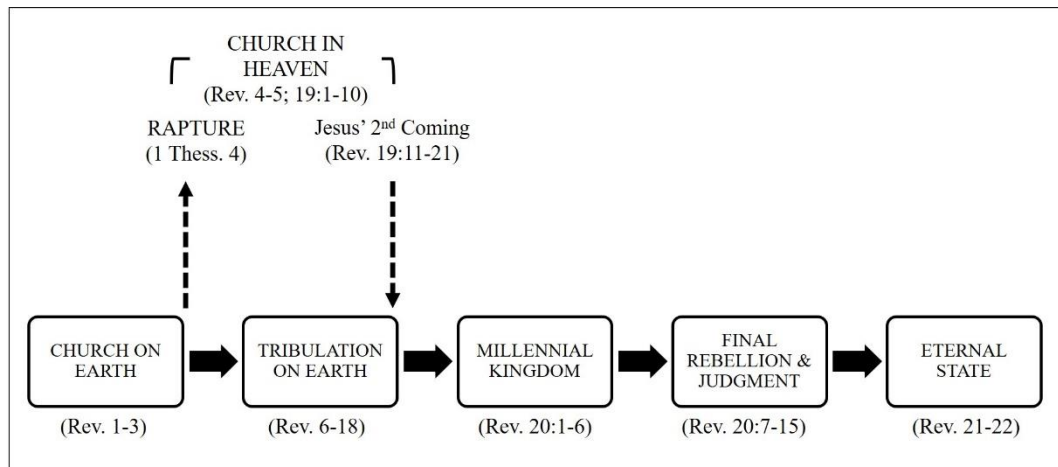
PART 5: THE TRIBULATION

CHAPTERS 6-7



A. MAIN IDEA

In Revelation 5:1-7, Jesus Christ, our kinsman-redeemer, takes the scroll with seven seals. This scroll is the title deed to the earth, originally given to man but forfeited to Satan when man sinned. The scroll details how Jesus will reclaim what is rightfully his. The breaking of the seals and the unrolling of the scroll marks the beginning of God's judgment during the Tribulation on earth. One of the main purposes of the Tribulation is to purge the earth of wicked people in order to establish the Messianic Kingdom in righteousness (Isa. 11:9; 13:9; 24:19-20; Ezek. 20:33-38; 37:23; Zech. 13:2; 14:9; Matt. 25:31-46). The figure below shows a suggested timeline of



Revelation.¹

B. COMMENTS

The Tribulation: The Tribulation Period is a future event lasting for seven years (Matt. 24:21-22; Dan. 9:24-27). It will be different from all previous tribulations.

- First, it will be worldwide (Rev. 3:10).
- Second, it will be different because of the way people will act.

As the judgments of the Tribulation unfold, some call on the mountains to fall on them in order to flee from God's wrath (Rev. 6:16). The book of Revelation contains more about this period than any other book in the Bible.

Whether the church goes through the Tribulation or not depends of one's view of the Rapture.² These views are described in "What the Bible Says about the Future" (www.taylornotes.info/bible-studies).

CHAPTER 6

The Seven Seals (6): The first four seals describe horses³ and riders (sometimes called the four horsemen of the Apocalypse). The fifth seal describes the souls of those who had been martyred during the time of these judgments. The sixth seal describes great physical destruction. The seventh seal takes place after the sealing of the 144,000.



First Seal (6:1-2): The first seal introduces the Antichrist. From the biblical description, we gather several details: he rides a white horse, which speaks of peace; at the beginning of the tribulation, the Antichrist will come under the pretense of bringing peace to the world (cf. Daniel 9:27). He is given a crown, which indicates that the Antichrist will exercise great authority (cf. Daniel 7:24-25). He holds a bow, which shows his true intentions, and he advances "as a conqueror bent on conquest" (Revelation 6:2).⁴



Second Seal (6:3-4): A rider on a red horse appears who demolishes peace and invokes war with much killing. Just as a white horse represents a victorious military leader, a red horse is associated with

¹ The figure is adapted from Paul Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy* (Chicago, Moody, 2006), p. 201 as referenced in John MacArthur's, *Because the Time is Near* (Chicago, Moody, 2007), 16. The timeline is based on the futurist view of Revelation. For various methods of interpreting Revelation see "What the Bible Says about the Future" <www.TaylorNotes.Info>.

² See Gundry, Stanley N., ed. *Three Views on the Rapture*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.

³ Horses in Scripture are often associated with triumph, majesty, power, and conquest (Rev. 19:11, 14; Job 39:19-25; Prov. 21:31).

⁴ S. Michael Houdman, *What are the Seven Seals of Revelation?* <<https://www.gotquestions.org/seven-seals-Revelation.html>>

war. Some scholars believe this symbolism may not be directed toward a specific war but to the condition of widespread war during the Tribulation Period, especially the last half, culminating in the Battle of Armageddon.



Third Seal (6:5-6): A rider on a black horse appears, bringing famine. The famine could conceivably be caused by the war in the 2nd Seal judgment or the 4th Bowl judgment discussed later. A day's wages was approximately 16¢, or a denarius. A quart of wheat would be sufficient for only one meal. If someone bought barley, they could get three quarts, enough for three meals, but would have nothing left to buy oil, wine, or other necessities.⁵



Fourth Seal (6:7-8): A rider on a pale horse appears, bringing death through war, famine, disease, and wild animals. The rider on this horse is named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. Because Hades is the temporary abode of unbelievers who die, when a person dies in this situation, he goes to Hades. Death on a massive scale is the inevitable consequence of widespread war and famine.



Fifth Seal (6:9-11): When the fifth seal was opened, John saw the souls of those who had been martyred because of their testimony and their faithfulness to the Word of God when faced with persecution. They cried out to God to avenge their deaths. They were most likely people who accepted Christ as their Savior after the Rapture and were martyred for their belief. They were told to wait a little longer because other Christians were to be martyred, and were each given a white robe.



Sixth Seal (6:12-17): The sixth seal judgment is the most severe at this point, involving celestial objects and earthly objects. A vast earthquake occurs (See also Matt. 24:7). The sun becomes dark black (See also Joel 2:2; 10, 30-31). The moon turns blood red (See Joel 2:10, 31). Stars fall to earth (See also Isaiah 34:4). The sky rolls back like a scroll (See also Isaiah 34:4). Mountains and islands move dramatically. People including world leaders, kings, and those of all ranks of life, flee to caves and mountains in fear. They'd rather face death than God's judgment. Notice the complete absence of repentance as people resign themselves to the pending judgment of sin.

CHAPTER 7

The Hiatus (7): The opening of the seventh seal does not occur until Revelation Chapter 8. Chapter 7 describes a hiatus, or a break in the seal judgments, until the 144,000 are sealed. In this chapter there are two groups of people; the 144,000 who are protected on earth during the Great Tribulation (vv. 1-8), and the multitude in heaven (vv. 9-17).

⁵ Walvoord, 554.

The 144,000 (7:1-8): To be specific, there are 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel,⁶ so there is no dispute that the "144,000" refers to a group of Israelis (Jews) during the Tribulation. It is not referring to the entire nation of Israel but only a few. Since the 144,000 are most likely born-again Jews, and because they were not raptured, it is believed that there is a rapid revival shortly after the church is taken. Why is this revival centered on the Jews? Because they were chosen by God to be a race through which He would reach out to the world.

A Great Multitude from Every Nation (7:9-17): The other group in this chapter is the "...great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" (NIV). This multitude is beyond number, unlike the 144,000 which is a specific number, indicating that it is another group of people. The multitude is defined in verse 14 and as those who have come out of the Tribulation now wearing the white robes which were given to them during the fifth seal judgment (See Rev. 6:9-11). They are individuals who accepted Christ during the Tribulation Period and who were martyred, most likely because of their refusal to worship the Antichrist.

C. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is one of the main purposes of the Tribulation?

2. Briefly describe the conditions on earth that result from Seal Judgments 1 through 4 (Rev. 6:1-8).

3. Briefly describe the celestial conditions that result from the 6th seal judgment (Rev. 6:12-17). How will people respond?

⁶ Notice that the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are missing and the tribe of Joseph is included. This is most likely because the tribes of Dan and Ephraim were so consumed with idolatry.

4. Who are the 144,000 described in Rev. 7:4-8?

5. Who are the individuals described in Rev. 7:9-15a and what were they doing?

6. What comforting words are given to these individuals in Rev. 7:15b-17a?

7. What will God do to these individuals (Rev. 7:17b)?