

THE GREAT TRIBULATION  
AND  
THE DAY OF THE LORD

*Reconciling the Premillennial  
Approach to Revelation*

GREG S. BAKER

GregSBaker.com



# **The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord**

*Reconciling the Premillennial Approach to Revelation*

by

Greg S. Baker

Independently Published

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ISBN 13: 978-1494822415

ISBN 10: 1494822415

First Edition

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*This book is dedicated to all Bible teachers. No one knows it all, and not everything that is taught is always accurate, but most do their best to sincerely teach eager minds the Word of God, preparing the next generation of Bible teachers.*

*Thank you.*

*Also to every Bible student who sincerely wishes to grow in the Word. Question everything and take nothing for granted.*

*And to the greatest teacher, the Holy Spirit. No one can guide us into all truth like Him.*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge all those who took time out of their day to read this book and point out errors, problems, flaws—and helpful hints. Most of the time, the pointing out of the problems was by far the most productive to me.

Specifically, I would like to acknowledge my wife Liberty for her patience and encouragement as I took time to write this book. *Thank you so much, Sweetheart. You are the best.*

My brother, Kevin Baker, was instrumental in allowing me to debate, argue, and present my conclusions. His sharp mind quickly helped me to hone my arguments and present them in a much clearer manner. Of all my many brothers, you are my favorite!

A variety of pastors helped...though some unknowingly. My initial attempts to understand the book of Revelation forced me to turn to my friends in the ministry. To each of you, thank you for taking time out to read this book and to help me as I bumbled through this project in my initial and sometimes pestering attempts to find answers.

Finally, I want to thank my parents, Keith and Debbie Baker. They believed in me because of the simple fact that I am their son. I find it hard to beat such love. Despite that, they took the time to understand—and agree with—my conclusions. *Thanks, Mom and Dad.*





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# INTRODUCTION

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**A**s a young pastor just getting started, I was filled with ambition for the Lord and a desire to build a strong work. Naturally, as most preachers do eventually, I turned to Revelation since I knew that people were instinctively interested in this prophetic book. I had hopes that teaching the book would draw people to the church.

I began teaching a year-long series of Bible studies on this most fascinating book. Having grown up hearing and studying Baptist doctrine, I held to the basic premillennial (futuristic) belief of Revelation. This belief stated that Jesus will return one day in the future, rapture out the saints, and then throw the world into a chaotic seven-year period known as the Great Tribulation. Following this Great Tribulation, Jesus would return once again and throw Satan in prison for 1,000 years while He ruled and reigned on this earth.

There are, naturally and unfortunately, many differing beliefs in this regard. Even within the futuristic take on Revelation, there are various and conflicting beliefs. All told, these differing opinions can create tremendous confusion to the Bible student or layman who finds these beliefs confusing, contradictory, convoluted, and inconsistent.

My purpose with this book is not to be the definitive work on the subject. I'll leave that to more intelligent folk than I. In some respects, I will be adding to the myriad of beliefs out there and thus once again prove that even likeminded people can have differing viewpoints—and still be Christians. No, my purpose is to provide a perspective that aligns more closely with the Scriptures as we read them. Finding this consistent

alignment of Scripture has ever been the problem with the study of Revelation—regardless of the viewpoint you approach it with. In our study, we often re-interpret Scripture to make it fit a certain approach or perspective. This is the problem I want to avoid in this book.

What I want to accomplish is a means by which you, the reader, can study the book of Revelation in a simple manner, without all the hype, convoluted, and bizarre attempts to connect the dots.

I hope you will forgive any bias on my part. I do have a bias; I think every person does, but I want to be upfront and honest about it. My hope is that you'll take this honest evaluation of the Scriptures to heart and see that Revelation is not as complicated as people have made it. This work will not be an exhaustive study of the End Times. Rather, this book is meant to be a *starting point* that will make all your other studies of the subject fall into perspective easier and more in line with Scripture.

# 1

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## A HISTORIC – FUTURISTIC APPROACH

**M**ost scholars agree that there are four basic approaches to the book of Revelation. These approaches are not, by any means, the entirety of the views. They represent the more well-known and established ones.

1. **Historicist Approach** – This view believes that most all of the events in Revelation have already happened throughout history. Amillennialism finds a home in this approach.
2. **Preterist Approach** – This position believes either that *all* the events in Revelation speak of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. or they speak of events that have already happened in the Roman Empire.
3. **Futuristic Approach** – This point of view believes that the events in Revelation are yet to happen. This group includes both Premillennialism and Postmillennialism beliefs. A subset of Premillennialism is the Pre-tribulation, Mid-tribulation, and Post-tribulation Rapture beliefs.

4. **Idealist Approach** – This approach which is also known as the “Spiritual Approach,” believes that Revelation is mostly symbolic and is more representative of concepts and ideas of Christianity.

Of course, there are those who differ some with my definitions, but in large part, you would encounter these four perspectives in studying the book of Revelation from outside source material. I believe, for most people, their approach to the book of Revelation is colored by larger doctrinal issues. How a person falls on what is considered to me more core or central doctrinal issues will largely determine which approach is taken toward Revelation. This is not true across the board, but it is true enough.

Because I believe in salvation by faith and through grace, a literal interpretation (not metaphorical) of the events in the Old Testament, a real Heaven, a real Hell, I tend to hold more to a futuristic perspective of the book of Revelation—as literal events that are yet to happen.

Depending upon your spiritual upbringing, you may have a different set of core doctrinal beliefs. This in turn would favor you toward one or another of the approaches to Revelation that may differ from mine. This book is for those who believe that the events in Revelation are largely still to come. My bias finds too many contradictions and faults with the other perspectives when compared to my beliefs.

However, my own study has shifted me somewhat into a combination of a historical and a futuristic perspective. And it is this study, specifically on the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord that I want to share with you.

### **Problems with the Futuristic and Idealist Approaches**

My study quickly pointed out several flaws in the futuristic approach. Having been reared in traditional Baptist beliefs, I began fortifying

myself with the Scriptures to back up what I believed—and that is when I started running into problems.

It began with Revelation 4:1 which states:

**Revelation 4:1** – *After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.*

For most of my church life and, indeed, through my Bible college years, I was taught that *this* verse marked the Rapture in Revelation—as, undoubtedly, many who are reading this book have been taught. Now, I happen to believe that all Scripture agrees, and that Scripture ought to back up Scripture. I didn't just want to gloss over the verse based on what I had always been taught. I wanted to back it up.

When I set out to do it, I could not. There were too many contradictions, loopholes, assumptions, presumptions, and twisting of the Scriptures to make it work. I called pastor after pastor asking for their input, advice, material, and teachings as I sought additional scriptural proof that Revelation 4:1 was indeed the Rapture. The more I talked to people, the more confused I became. It seemed that nearly every preacher with whom I talked had a different idea of what the verses meant *exactly*. Many disagreed with each other, which did not help me at all. I pointed out the verses that confused me, listened to their explanations, and came away shaken at how often I felt even more confused than helped.

I never swayed from my belief in a futuristic approach to Revelation, but I did find fault with *ALL* of the prevailing subset beliefs in this approach. There are two basic futuristic approaches to Revelation:

1. **Premillennialism** – This belief holds that Jesus' Second Coming will happen *before* a literal 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ. His coming will be the start of that reign.

2. **Postmillennialism** – This belief purports that through the preaching of the Gospel, the world will eventually be Christianized and thus usher in the reign of Christ. Those who take this stance believe that the Second Coming of Christ will occur at the end of this period.

My study began to reveal flaws in both beliefs, which I found disturbing. What’s more, within this belief, there are a variety of opinions regarding the Rapture. And I found both faults and validation for all three of the “Rapture” theories within Premillennialism.

The word ‘Rapture’ is not found in the Bible. This descriptive term means “a snatching away.” The word is used to describe the belief that, at some point, Jesus will not only return, but take His saints out of this world. There has been (and will no doubt continue to be) much debate among Premillennialists as to when this snatching away will actually occur. My initial study found validation and flaws for all *three* of the prevailing beliefs, which are as follows:

1. **Pre-Tribulation Rapture** – The Rapture of the saints happens *before* the seven years of tribulation.
2. **Mid-Tribulation Rapture** – The Rapture of the saints happens *halfway* through the tribulation period.
3. **Post-Tribulation Rapture** – The Rapture of the saints happens *after* the seven years of tribulation.

With these descriptions in mind, let me break down some of the problems that I had. An honest evaluation of the verses in question below will reveal clearly the problem with ALL of the views. Some of the objections tend to point to one or the other of the prevailing beliefs, and I could clearly see where a particular stance on the Rapture came into being. The problem is when each camp attempts to explain away the other verses—the ones that support the other camps.



**Objection #1** – The disciples asked Jesus *three* questions at the beginning of Matthew 24. The typical Pre-tribulation belief says that these were answered in a different order than they were asked. If so, where, pray tell, did Jesus answer the first question about the destruction of the temple? This question bothers all but the Post-tribulation view believers.

**Objection #2** – The verses that describe the Rapture in Matthew 24 are those between verses 29 and 51. Most agree on this conclusion. Why then does the “Great Tribulation” appear in verse 21—before the Rapture? This mention seems to lend weight to the Post-tribulation view.

**Objection #3** – If the Rapture is described starting in Matthew 24:29, why then does the Bible say, “Immediately following the tribulation of those days...”? Even a cursory study of the Scriptures tells us that the “tribulation” of verse 29 is the same “great tribulation” of verse 21. How can the rapture follow the Great Tribulation? Doesn’t this verse give credence toward the Post-tribulation view?

**Objection #4** – Matthew 24:34 tells us that Jesus told His disciples that their generation will not pass until ALL these things were fulfilled. Doesn’t this give credence more toward the Preterist or Historic approach to Revelation?

**Objection #5** – If Revelation 4:1 is addressing the Rapture, why then does the sixth seal in Revelation 6:12-17 so closely parallel—almost word for word—the description of the Rapture in Matthew 24:29-51? Doesn’t this lend credence to the Mid-tribulation view?

**Objection #6** – If the Rapture happens in Revelation 4:1, why then does Revelation 7:9-14 tell us of a multitude that *no man could number* that was saved out of the Great Tribulation? Does this not lend credence to the Mid-tribulation view?

**Objection #7** – Is it not true that several men of God have had similar experiences to John in Revelation 4:1? Enoch was taken by God in something similar to a rapture, Ezekiel had the experience twice, Elijah was carried into heaven in a whirlwind, and the two witnesses in Revelation 11 had nearly identical experiences. Could not Revelation 11 (the two witnesses who are called up with a trumpet) be the Rapture of the saints? Would this Scripture not lend credence to the Mid-tribulation Rapture view?

**Objection #8** – If the Rapture happens midway through or after the Tribulation, why does God repeatedly warn us that we need to be ready for His coming—a coming that will be quite unexpected and quick—like a thief in the night? If we see signs of the Tribulation, then will we not know that the Lord’s coming will be soon? It can’t be as a thief in the night when the thief tells you that he is coming in the next seven days, can it? Doesn’t this verse lend credence to the Pre-tribulation view?

**Objection #9** – If the seals are part of the Tribulation, then why do the martyrs in the fifth seal believe that God has yet to begin the tribulation of man? In fact, they are told to wait for a season until *more* Christians are killed. Why do they think that the Tribulation has not yet started? Does this lend credence to the Preterist or Historic approach to Revelation?

**Objection #10** – If the Tribulation is a time for God to show vengeance for a world that has rejected Him, His people, and His Word, why then would God allow the Christians to suffer through *any* part it? Does not 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9 tell us that the Christians will have no part in the wrath mentioned—the Tribulation? Does not this lend credence to the Pre-tribulation Rapture view?

These are just a few of my objections. I would raise one of these objections to any number of pastors in an effort to understand and find resolution, listen to the counter argument, and be amazed at how they

twisted the Scriptures to say other than the simple clear meaning of the verses. I was astounded and extremely disappointed.

At this juncture, you may already be wondering which one of the Rapture views I hold. Strictly speaking, by the definitions given, I hold to none of them. I don't think any of them are correct. In fact, I believe that only by mangling the Scriptures can any of them be proven.

But I do believe, and will endeavor to prove scripturally, that the Rapture occurs *before* the seven years of which Revelation speaks. Still, I am *not* a Pre-tribulationist. Keep reading, and you'll learn why.

This Bible study is about approaching the Premillennial perspective to the Scriptures in a way that will eliminate the majority, if not all, of the objections and flaws inherent in the belief. Oh, there will always be someone who can find flaws, but if you are a Premillennialist and you also find it difficult to reconcile the way the verses read, then you will truly enjoy this book.

Thus, in this book, I will approach the book of Revelation with several basic understandings:

- We CAN understand the book of Revelation.
- That, unless God explains otherwise, we will take everything in Revelation literally.
- That the inspired, undefiled, non-contradictive Holy Word of God is found in the King James version of the Bible!

Let me explain these points.

First, I will readily agree that there are some things that God does want to remain hidden from us like, for example, the seven thunders mentioned in Revelation 10:1-4. John was prepared to tell us all about them when God stepped in and forbade it. But in general, if God *wrote*

it for us, He wanted us to *understand* it. I believe that it is avoiding the issue to say that God doesn't want us to understand the book of Revelation. For if that is true, then we have another problem, for my Bible says that God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). Matthew 13:11 and Luke 8:10 tell us that Jesus wished His disciples to KNOW the mysteries of God. We, as born-again Christians, are the recipients of that promise! I state again: the book of Revelation CAN be understood!

Second, the book of Revelation addresses many issues that appear confusing and seemingly impossible to understand. When faced with these, many Biblicists revert to the classic mode of explanation—symbolism (the idealistic or spiritual approach to Revelation). That there is symbolism in Revelation is without question. However, to say that the entire book is symbolic leaves me in serious doubt. A rule of thumb is that when God explains His symbolism, then we know it is symbolism. An example of God's explaining His own symbolism is in Revelation 1:20 and 17:7-18. If God is consistent, which I believe He is, then He will ALWAYS explain the symbolism that He uses (see Daniel 7:15, 16; 8:16 and 9:21-23).

To say that the entire book of Revelation is written figuratively allows room for many interpretations, including some very wild ones. I am only interested in God's thoughts. Think about this: if the book of Revelation is symbolic in its entirety, then it would hardly be a stretch to attribute the writings to my old high school. For example, I could make a case that the principal of my high school was the Antichrist, and my biology teacher the False Prophet, my school ID the mark of the beast, and so forth. If my world was limited to my high school and my understanding of things merely bound to that small realm, then yes, I could come to such an absurd conclusion—and even defend it vehemently. It would not be hard to take any major event in history and twist it to fit Revelation in a figurative way. Figuratively, twisting events into a spiritual meaning can be easily done with World War II, the Roman Empire, and other major periods of history. I don't want to base this entire text on

assumption and presumption. Therefore, unless God tells us differently, we will take it literally.

Third, there are now so many different Bible versions that the unintended—or perhaps intended—consequence is that it has bred more confusion than clarity. Because of copyright laws, no two Bibles can be exactly alike. If you take any two versions and set them side by side, then you can only make three assumptions:

- Either this one is wrong, and that one is right
- Or this one is right, and that one is wrong
- Or they are both wrong

But they both can't be 100 percent right because they say *different* things! It is not the purpose of this book to go into why I have chosen the King James Bible as my standard. All Scripture in this book has been taken from the King James Bible.

My hope—and goal—is to show you that Revelation is not nearly as confusing as most people make it, and that with just the right bit of understanding, the entire book can be opened to your understanding and edification. This is not a verse-by-verse study. Rather, this is an overview—a starting point—so that you can do your own study, clearly, without confusion and without the need to twist Scripture to fit a prevailing belief.

I do not want this book to become a substitute for your own study. God blesses the person who reads Revelation—NOT THIS BOOK (Revelation 1:3)!

## **The Advantages of the Futuristic Approach**

I am a Premillennialist. There are a variety of reasons for my taking this stance. Firstly and foremost, I find it to be the most consistent view of the Scriptures. For me, once the initial problems with this approach were reconciled, everything fell into place so easily and so beautifully, that I

had to just sit back and sigh in relief—my relief wasn't the result of my study resembling my old belief. I was prepared to believe whatever the Scriptures would teach. My relief came about because, for the first time, all the Scriptures actually made sense and worked together.

This book aims at bringing the foundational building blocks together in such a way that you too may find a compelling and satisfactory perspective of Revelation and the end times.

Secondly, Premillennialism is the belief widely held by the early church—before Catholicism. The disciples held this belief.<sup>1</sup> This fact in itself is significant. These are the men who were closest to Jesus, who heard Him teach, who passed that knowledge to their own converts. I find it interesting that the Catholic church later began persecuting those who held this belief.

For a time, the Catholic church succeeded in driving the belief out for the most part, and the belief—also known as Chiliasm—found refuge in a few scattered groups who were in hiding from the Roman Catholic Church. Eventually, the belief regained more momentum through the Anabaptists, Huguenots, and some Puritans.

My other reasons are contained in this book.

## **Problems with the Historic and Preterist Approaches**

Have the events in Revelation already happened or are they still to come?

Before we get into the heart of this book, it will be necessary to address this particular controversy. I have already stated my position as well as some of the problems I have had with my own stand—which is the impetus of this book. Now I need to clearly define why I take the futuristic approach.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.theopedia.com/Premillennialism](http://www.theopedia.com/Premillennialism) (as of 12/24/2013).

Because of the phraseology of certain verses in Revelation, many people claim that the book of Revelation describes events that happened shortly *after* it was written—sometime between 50 – 100 A.D. This is a Preterist approach to Revelation. The answer, either way, will be persuasive as to how we view the rest of the book of Revelation. Here are the verses:

1. **Revelation 1:1** – *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.*
2. **Revelation 22:6** – *And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.*
3. **Revelation 3:11** – *Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*
4. **Revelation 22:7** – *Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*
5. **Revelation 22:12** – *And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*

The controversy lies more in the first two verses—*Revelation 1:1* and *22:6*. If the verses mean that the events are to happen shortly after they are written (which they seem to say at first glance), then either most or all of what the verse addresses has occurred already.

This would be made simple if we could find in history the literal events of Revelation. But there are no historical events that exactly match the events described by John. Only by symbolic means can one claim that history has already witnessed the book of Revelation. For example, by using such a method of symbolism, I could make a persuasive argument that Nebuchadnezzar was the Antichrist, despite him having lived well

before Christ was born. This is an example of one of the major flaws in the Preterist and even the Historic approaches to Revelation.

Regardless, many of the events listed in Revelation are staggering. If they had already happened, there should be tremendous documentation on it. For example:

1. **Revelation 6:12-17** – These verses record that *every* one will see God. Such an event would have been recorded in history, and I cannot find any reference to it. To say that this event is symbolic is rather prosaic. *How* do you know it is symbolic? Where is your scriptural proof?
2. **Revelation 11:3-12** – This is the story of the two witnesses who were killed, resurrected, and taken into Heaven. If this spectacular event had already happened, then somewhere somehow it would have been recorded since the Bible says the entire world will either witness or know of this event. But history is silent on this event.
3. **Revelation 19:1-21** – Where in history has Jesus Himself descended to the earth and destroyed all His enemies with such a slaughter that a river of blood flowed as deep as a horse’s bridle? If this event is one that is still to happen, then how do we know that the rest of the events are yet to happen? If these events had taken place in past history, this incident surely would have been included.
4. **Revelation 20:1-7** – Has Jesus physically reigned on the earth? People say yes—in their hearts. But when He rules for the 1,000 years mentioned in Revelation, He will do it with a rod of iron (*Revelation 2:27, 12:5, 19:15*)! When has that happened? And what about this mass resurrection? History is silent on both events.



5. **Revelation 21:1** – When has there been a new heaven or a new earth? Or is this symbolic as well? When did a heavenly city descend out of heaven?

The Historic and Preterist approaches have responses to these questions, but they are based on a symbolic representation instead of literal events. Again, I find this stance problematic since meaning can be attached to any event in history—if you try hard enough. Attaching symbolic meanings opens the door for too much confusion, and God is not the author of confusion.

But if these events are still to happen, what do *Revelation 1:1* and *Revelation 22:6* mean when they say “shortly be done” or “shortly come to pass”? If the Bible is true (and we can’t ignore any verse *and* all Scripture must agree), then we have a puzzle on our hands. But I believe that these phrases can easily be explained.

The Greek word that is translated “shortly” in both of the above-mentioned verses is “*tacho*,” but only when preceded by the Greek preposition “*en*” which means simply “in,” “by,” “with” and so on. Interestingly enough, two other verses in Revelation have the word “short” in them:

**Revelation 12:12** – *Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*

**Revelation 17:10** – *And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.*

However, in both of these verses, a different Greek word, “*oligos*,” is used. Reading these last two verses leaves no doubt that He means that some event will come to pass not far in the future in relation to the other events listed. The verses in question, however, do not use this word. The

use of a different Greek word indicates that a different meaning is implied. But in what manner does this difference take?

You could argue that the words mean exactly the same thing. True, but only if the consistency of that can be proven. For example: If I said, “That is nice looking,” does that statement convey the same idea as if I said, “That is absolutely gorgeous!”? Of course not! The statements convey two different messages. Indeed, when a different Greek word is used, there must have been a need to convey a *different* message. Remember that God used the same man to pen all four verses!

Therefore it stands to reason that the Greek word “*tachos*” conveys a different message than the word “*oligos*.” To prove this, one only needs to look at the contexts of other verses that use the word “*tachos*.” Here are the other references:

1. **Luke 18:8** – *I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*
2. **Acts 12:7** – *And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.*
3. **Acts 22:18** – *And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.*
4. **Acts 25:4** – *But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.*
5. **Romans 16:20** – *And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

A careful analysis of these verses would quickly lead a person to realize that the connotation is not that of an event that will come to pass in the near future, *but of something done in a short amount of time!* For example, in *Acts 12:7*, an angel tells Peter to rise up quickly (*tachos*). The angel is not telling Peter to get up sometime in the near future, but when he starts to get up, not to be slow about it! Do it fast!

*That is the difference. While “oligos” indicates an event that will happen in the near future, “tachos” indicates an event that, when it happens, will occur in a short space of time—in other words, quickly or speedily.* Jesus, therefore, wasn’t saying that the events foretold in Revelation would necessarily happen in the near future. He was saying that when they do happen, they will happen fast—within a short amount of time!

The rest of Scripture and Jesus’ teaching bears out this explanation. Examine:

1. **1 Corinthians 15:52** – “In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye!” is obviously not referring to something that happens in the near future, but in the quickness of an event.
2. **Matthew 24:27** – This verse explains that His coming will be like lightning! He meant that it takes place in a short amount of time.
3. **1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Peter 3:10** – Both verses tell us that He will come like a thief in the night—unexpectedly and suddenly.
4. **Matthew 13:36** –His coming will happen suddenly!

There you have it. Jesus NEVER gave a time frame for when the events in Revelation would occur (*Matthew 25:13*). He just said that when they begin to happen, they will happen in a short amount of time. To be exact, seven years is the time frame of Revelation.

This explanation does not mean that they could not have happened back then; it just means that it could still be in the future somewhere too. My own opinion, to which I will speak more on later, is that from 70 A.D. on, everything that needed to be fulfilled was fulfilled for Jesus to return. I don't believe He has yet, but nothing remains that needs to be done for His return.

## **Advantages of the Historic and Preterist Approach**

I would be less than honest if I did not point out that some arguments within the Historic or Preterist approaches are valid. Indeed, some of them are quite compelling and, in my opinion, very biblically based.

I have come to agree with several of them and have incorporated them into my singular approach to the book of Revelation. I found, interestingly enough, that they only reinforced my overall futuristic approach.

For example, the Preterist view on Daniel's 70 weeks (Daniel 9) is quite compelling and much more solidly biblically based than what the typical Premillennialist possesses. I had been taught that the last week of Daniel was in fact not part of the first 69 weeks, but that week was somehow separated by thousands of years and will be fulfilled within the seven years mentioned in Revelation.

The Preterist view is that all 70 weeks were fulfilled shortly after Jesus' death. In fact, they hold that Jesus' death fulfilled every single one of the prophecies listed in Daniel 9:24. A substantial amount of Scripture supports this view, and only someone who is stubborn and closed minded will dismiss these biblical arguments without duly considering them.

A historical argument for some of the Seals mentioned in Revelation 6 are also very compelling. I will address this argument later, but suffice it to say that incorporating these biblical arguments into my understanding of Revelation has laid a very solid, comfortable, and compelling foundation that I want to present here.

You could say that I am about 30 percent Historic and 70 percent Futuristic in my approach to the book of Revelation. In fact, it is this merging of these approaches that have solved all the problems and flaws that I found, making Revelation simple, sound, and sacred. As you read further, you may find aspects of all four of the major approaches to the book of Revelation.

When Jesus gave the disciples the prophecy in Matthew 24, all of it was still in the future to them. John's Revelation came as late as 96 A.D., nearly 26 years after Titus' destruction of Jerusalem. He had already begun to witness some of Jesus' prophecy coming true. No longer was it 100 percent futuristic.

Nearly 2,000 years have elapsed since John's Revelation as of this writing. Some of what would have been futuristic to John is now history to us—I would say as much as 30 percent.

Eventually, once we are beyond the new Heaven and the new earth in Revelation 21, all of this will be history to us. At that point, I will be 100 percent Historic in my approach to Revelation.

The point is that, as time passes, we are getting closer and closer to the fulfillment of these events.

# 2

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## A BASIC OUTLINE OF REVELATION

**G**od gives an outline of the book in Revelation 1:19. It is not perhaps the only outline, but it will give us a start on a practical look at Revelation and how everything will come together.

**Revelation 1:9** – *Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.*

1. The things that thou hast seen (Revelation 1).
2. The things that are (Revelation 2-3).
3. And the things which shall be hereafter (Revelation 4-22).

This verse, of course, is a basic outline of the book of Revelation. We can divine a more detailed outline for each of the three sections that might additionally help readers in their understanding of the book. The following outline is for the sake of the reader, not only in reading the book of Revelation, but also for this book as well. The reasons for dividing up the book in this manner will, in some cases, be apparent, but not in others. I will explain “why” in much more detail as we go through Revelation.

### **What Thou Hast Seen (Revelation 1)**

1. An introduction to the book itself and to the letters written to the seven churches

### **The Things Which Are (Revelation 2–3)**

1. Letter to the Church of Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7)
2. Letter to the Church of Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11)
3. Letter to the Church of Pergamos (Revelation 2:12-17)
4. Letter to the Church of Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29)
5. Letter to the Church of Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6)
6. Letter to the Church of Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13)
7. Letter to the Church of Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22)

### **The Things Which Shall Be Hereafter (Revelation 4–22)**

1. The start of the heavenly vision and the 7 seals (Revelation 4:1–7:17)
2. The First Cycle, the Seven Trumpets (Revelation 8:1–11:19)
3. The Second Cycle, the Dragon, the Antichrist and the False Prophet (Revelation 12:1–14:20)
4. The Third Cycle, the Seven Vials (Revelation 15:1–19:21)
5. The Thousand Year Reign of Christ and the Great White Throne of Judgment (Revelation 20:1-15)
6. The New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1–22:21)

# 3

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## THE SEVEN CHURCHES

**T**his is another controversy that needs to be addressed. To begin with, let me reiterate what I have already said. Unless God *says* something is symbolic, we will assume that He meant exactly what He originally said. Nowhere in Revelation does He even infer that the seven churches are, in fact, seven ages of church progression. That is not to say that that theory is completely wrong. It is simply to say that God does not say emphatically that it is. God treats these churches as individual entities of that time. Why should we do any differently?

The verse that is used to justify this thinking is Revelation 4:1.

**Revelation 4:1** – *After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.*

God tells John that He will be shown things “hereafter.” The word “church” is no longer mentioned in Revelation from that point. The question is, does He mean *after* the church age or *after* the present point in time of John’s own life?

First, I want you to notice what God did not say. He didn’t say “after the churches”; neither did He use the truncated word, “after.” He said



“*hereafter*.” The word “*here*” means “present” or “now”; thus it seems apparent that Jesus meant the AFTER the present moment of His conversation with John. In other words, Jesus was talking to John about events that would occur after their conversation.

Also note that these seven churches were seven *real, existing* churches.

Of that fact there is no doubt. All seven churches were located in Asia Minor (Turkey) and located close to the Aegean Sea or the Mediterranean Sea. Patmos, the island to where John had been exiled, is located off the coast of Asia Minor (Turkey) in the Aegean Sea. These seven churches happened to be the closest churches within reach of his pen. They were the seven most likely churches to receive something from John.

In conclusion, it would be very difficult to prove scripturally that the seven churches mentioned are, in fact, the seven ages of the church. I would be more inclined to believe that each and every church can go through similar problems as these seven did, and that all churches ought to take heed lest they fall into similar patterns of sin and decadence.

I happen to believe that the simple answer is the best answer.

**2 Corinthians 11:3** – *But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

# 4

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## THE GREAT CONTROVERSY

**T**his whole affair and controversy revolve around *the Great Tribulation versus the Great Day of the Lord*. This is the meat of this small book. To understand Revelation and a proper approach to it, it is necessary to understand three concepts:

1. The Rapture
2. The Great Tribulation
3. The Day of the Lord

A person's belief regarding the teachings on these three concepts dictates how he will perceive the rest of Revelation. It is essential, therefore, that you understand exactly what these are, what they describe, and what they talk about. With these three events clearly understood, you will have little difficulty in understanding the book of Revelation.

The Rapture is a single event that happens within a twinkling of an eye. But the other two events, the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord describe much longer periods of time. The Rapture is tied to both of them. But how? In what way? The majority of this chapter will discuss that.

## **The Problem**

The Rapture (which is not a Biblical word, rather a descriptive word that means “a snatching away”) is a puzzling event to most people. The Bible clearly talks about this event in 1 Corinthians 15:51-58, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Matthew 24:29–25:30. As a Biblical truth, it is an undeniable fact to me. *The Rapture will happen*. Jesus will take all His elect out of the world in a supernatural manner.

The difficulty is in isolating the event in Revelation and how it relates to the other two events, the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. This is the great controversy that has only added to the entire disputation of our understanding of Revelation. Some see the Rapture as only symbolic. Others think it happens after what is typically known as the Great Tribulation. Others think it will happen only after the Millennial Reign of Christ. And there are those who believe that the Second Coming of Christ is split into two parts. The first is the rapture of the saints, and then seven years later, Jesus finishes His return by conquering the world and setting up His millennial reign.

Over the centuries, the explanations for the book of Revelation have become more complex, more distorted, and more abused than one would generally expect. The reason for this complexity is simple for the Futuristic approach: since the book describes events yet to happen, we have no historical record to check against our theology. It allows for speculation and innovation on behalf of the reader. For the other approaches, there is a similar problem. There are no historical events that perfectly match the ones described in Revelation, so there is much squeezing of the Scriptures into a shape that resembles some historical event. The problem, with a little imagination, is that this can be done with many events. In an attempt to avoid these mistakes, I will follow these three simple rules throughout this book:

1. *All Scripture must agree. If it does not, we have a contradiction that would discredit everything.*

2. *We must try to do away with assumptions. A thesis that is built on assumptions is inherently flawed at its foundation and must alter the simple meaning of other verses in order to fit the prevailing concept. I do not believe that taking the simple meaning of a verse and making it into something more complex is rightly dividing the Word of truth—it is an erroneous way to study the Bible.*
3. *The Bible will explain itself. At times, there are passages that seem to make little sense. In such cases, there is another passage of Scripture that will explain it satisfactorily. If we rely on this, we will do away with personal interpretations of Scripture.*

Interestingly enough, in the Futuristic and Premillennial approach to Revelation, all the prevailing sub-beliefs regarding the Rapture have a common assumption that, to my knowledge, has not been viewed biblically.

The wrongful assumption of what the “Great Tribulation” really is has caused nearly all the problems! A result of this misunderstanding—and the assumptions attached to it—has led to these problems:

1. A misunderstanding of Scripture regarding the Great Tribulation.
2. A failure to properly pinpoint *when* the Rapture actually occurs in the book of Revelation.
3. A complex and confusing explanation of Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, and the entire book of Revelation itself.
4. A created belief structure so riddled with twisted explanations that it gives rise to contradictory and

inflammatory beliefs, including Pre-tribulationist, Post-tribulationist, and Mid-tribulationist views.

5. A twisting of Scripture to fit a belief instead of allowing Scripture to determine belief.
6. Interpretations that have given rise to bizarre and wild speculations and beliefs of future events.
7. An analysis that has created unnecessary confusion.

I once sat on an ordination board that was comprised of local pastors. We were to question a young man on his beliefs to determine if we were to ordain him. We all knew the young man, so at first, our questions were more in the nature of teasing than any real search for doctrinal errors. Until, that is, someone asked about the Rapture. The question was like dry wood to a fire. Within the space of five minutes, the preachers involved were arguing over various interpretations of Scripture as they saw it. This contention went on for an hour and a half until a truce was called since no one would yield his opinion. Everyone had only one thing in common, and it was the assumed foundation for so many varied beliefs that I felt overwhelmed just listening to it all. *Interestingly, it was the common denominator of the Great Tribulation that was also the source of their contradictory beliefs!*

We know from reading Revelation that a period of seven years will elapse during which God will pour out His wrath on an unjust and unholy world that has rejected Him, His Son, His Word, and His people. It is a time of vengeance. It is a time of horror and destruction. It is a time of fear and hatred. It is a time where Satan comes to full power in the body of the Antichrist and the unholy trinity. This period will be horrible.

And it will last for seven years.

To be blunt about it, I think the key to understanding the Rapture and to understanding Revelation lies in the proper understanding of the word “*tribulation*.”

I believe it is the misuse of this word that has created so much diversity about Revelation, Matthew 24-25, Mark 13 and Luke 21.

## **Does the Great Tribulation Refer to the Seven Years of Revelation?**

What many call “The Great Tribulation,” in fact, should NOT be called by that name. Doing so has, I believe, led to many misunderstandings, false explanations of Scripture, and general confusion.

As I already mentioned in the introduction, I was dismayed when I attempted to prove scripturally what I had been always taught was true. In fact, the Holy Spirit so forbade such a haphazard approach to His Word that I was forced to throw out everything that I thought I knew and start from scratch.

I went so far as to challenge exactly what the Scripture meant when it mentioned the “tribulation.” I got the idea from a Preterist approach that tried to show that the Great Tribulation and the events in Revelation were the same—but had already happened in history. I wondered if they were partially right. I couldn’t see scripturally that Revelation had already happened, but their idea that the Great Tribulation itself was historical led me to study the Scriptures and find out how the Bible itself viewed the Great Tribulation.

*To my extreme satisfaction, when I, at last, got my mind settled on this one issue, my understanding fell into place as if someone had turned on a light bulb. It suddenly all began to make sense. My study from that point on was easy and exciting. I no longer had to explain away certain verses. I no longer struggled with the cohesiveness of the Scriptures regarding prophecy. My understanding of Revelation came together as if the Holy Spirit was putting the puzzle together—instead of me. How wonderful! The book of Revelation actually reads like the rest of the Bible does! And I can study it like I study the rest of Scripture—line upon line, precept upon precept—instead of pinball fashion.*

Let's see what Scripture has to say on the subject.

Twenty-five verses in the Bible use the word “*tribulation*,” and only *two* verses use the word in reference to the lost or heathen people!

Here are the two verses that mention heathen or lost people:

1. Romans 2:9
2. 2 Thessalonians 1:6

Every other verse in Scripture—including the FIVE references in Revelation—talks about the Jews suffering or Christians suffering some sort of tribulation. Here is the list:

- |                     |                         |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Deuteronomy 4:30 | 13. Romans 12:12        |
| 2. Judges 10:14     | 14. 2 Corinthians 1:4   |
| 3. 1 Samuel 10:19   | 15. 2 Corinthians 2:7   |
| 4. 1 Samuel 26:24   | 16. Ephesians 3:13      |
| 5. Matthew 13:21    | 17. 1 Thessalonians 3:4 |
| 6. Matthew 24:21*   | 18. 2 Thessalonians 1:4 |
| 7. Matthew 24:29    | 19. Revelation 1:9      |
| 8. Mark 13:24       | 20. Revelation 2:9      |
| 9. John 16:33       | 21. Revelation 2:10     |
| 10. Acts 14:22      | 22. Revelation 2:22*    |
| 11. Romans 5:3      | 23. Revelation 7:14*    |
| 12. Romans 8:35     |                         |

Of these verses, only THREE—Matthew 24:21, Revelation 2:22, and Revelation 7:14—actually mention the entire phrase of “Great Tribulation.”

It is also of interest to note that the word “tribulation” *appears only five times* in the entire book of Revelation. The first instance is mentioned by John in reference to himself—that *he is suffering tribulation*. The next three appear in the letters written to the various churches regarding tribulation that they will face (between chapters 2 and 4). Only one

reference to the word occurs beyond chapter 4! The last one, in chapter 7, specifically references Christians who had come out of *great tribulation*. So, in all five cases, the subject of the tribulation are saints or Christians.

Why do people use the word “tribulation” to describe the main events in Revelation? Primarily because of *two* short passage that are not even found in Revelation. The first is found in Daniel 12:

**Daniel 12:1** – *And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.*

Although this verse technically doesn’t use the word “tribulation,” using “trouble” instead, the wording is very similar to that of Matthew 24:21-22:

**Matthew 24:21-22** – *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.*

The logic is that only in the events of Revelation will there be a tribulation or trouble unlike anything the world has ever experienced. By using that simple logic, people have automatically applied the phrase “great tribulation” to the seven years mentioned in Revelation.

Unfortunately, the contexts of both passages are referring to either Jews or Christians—or both. The verse in Daniel 12, for example, refers twice to the people of Daniel—the Jews. In Matthew’s passage, the very next verse talks about the elect—Christians. In fact, Jesus, Who is telling the disciples about this tribulation, often uses language that implies that they and the Jews would live to see it. More on that thought later.



The misunderstanding of these two passages has led to a host of confusion, theories, false doctrine, and division among Premillennialists. The following chapters should help dispel any doubts you may have about these passages. This book will, in particular, dwell much more fully on the passage in Matthew 24 as it is the one that uses the term, “*Great Tribulation*.” I take the verses one at a time out of Matthew 24 and discuss them in the next chapter, so keep on reading.

So if the word “*tribulation*” is the wrong word to describe those seven years in Revelation, what should that terrible time be called? *A better Scriptural term to describe the seven years in Revelation is the Day of the Lord!*

## **Does the Day of the Lord Refer to the Seven Years of Revelation?**

Instead of using *tribulation*, I believe we should use the Day of the Lord. This is the term that Scripture uses to describe the seven years of Revelation.

1. **Isaiah 13:6-9** tells us that it will be a time of destruction, a time of cruelty, at time of great wrath and fierce anger where God will destroy the sinners.
2. **Jeremiah 46:10** tells us that the day is to avenge God of His adversaries.
3. **Zephaniah 1:7-8** tells us that it will be a sacrifice (a killing) and that guests will be bidden—compare this Scripture to Revelation 19:17-18.
4. **2 Peter 3:10** tells us that the Day of the Lord will bring about the end of the heavens and the earth. Compare that verse to Revelation 21:1.

The phrase, “the Day of the Lord,” is found in 29 verses and is almost exclusively attached to destruction, death and vengeance on the heathen. Here is the list of verses:

- |                      |                         |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Isaiah 2:12       | 16. Zephaniah 1:8       |
| 2. Isaiah 13:6       | 17. Zephaniah 1:14      |
| 3. Isaiah 13:9       | 18. Zephaniah 1:18      |
| 4. Isaiah 32:8       | 19. Zephaniah 2:2       |
| 5. Jeremiah 46:10    | 20. Zephaniah 2:3       |
| 6. Lamentations 2:22 | 21. Zechariah 13:1      |
| 7. Ezekiel 13:5      | 22. Malachi 4:5         |
| 8. Ezekiel 30:3      | 23. Acts 2:20           |
| 9. Joel 1:15         | 24. 1 Corinthians 5:5   |
| 10. Joel 2:11        | 25. 2 Corinthians 1:14  |
| 11. Joel 2:31        | 26. 1 Thessalonians 5:2 |
| 12. Joel 3:14        | 27. 2 Peter 3:10        |
| 13. Amos 5:18        | 28. Revelation 6:17     |
| 14. Amos 5:20        | 29. Revelation 16:14    |
| 15. Obadiah 1:15     |                         |

Consider how the wrath of God is described in Revelation itself:

1. In **Revelation 6:17**, the Bible says, “...for the great DAY of his wrath is come.” It is interesting to note that that time is described as the “great day” instead of the “great tribulation.” This event happens just before the floodgates are opened in Revelation chapter 8 with the seven trumpets.
2. In **Revelation 16:14**, the Bible says, “...to gather them to the battle of that GREAT DAY of God Almighty.” Again the term “great day” is used instead of “great tribulation.” The book of Revelation uses the words “great day” or the “day of God Almighty” to describe the destruction and wrath of God on this world—not the word *tribulation*.

The difference between the two terms used in these two verses is obvious to me. To attach “tribulation” to the seven years of Revelation is not consistent with Scripture and can quickly lead to misunderstandings of the Scriptures. “The Day of the Lord” is a much better fit. It is God’s time; it is the Lord’s day! It is where Jesus takes over. It is where man no longer has a free reign to work unrighteousness and it is when Satan is defeated.

Truly, Revelation is the moment of God’s triumph—more than it is a time of tribulation to lost people! At this time God finally avenges His people. The people of this world are left in no doubt that there is a real God.

I also believe that the Rapture is a part of this Day of the Lord, and it is the initial event that kicks off this seven-year period. Consider 2 Thessalonians 2:2-12 in this regard.

The “day” isn’t a single moment; it is the time when God finally makes Himself known in all His glory. I believe this “day” begins with the Rapture and ends with Jesus’ triumphant return to cast Satan into prison for a thousand years. This opinion will make more sense as you read further.

The main question, however, regarding the Day of the Lord is where does the Rapture take place? Does it take place BEFORE, or does it take place DURING, or does it take place AFTER this seven-year period? The answer to this question would give us some idea of what to expect. If Christians are going to live through that time, they must be prepared for that time of tribulation. If they are going to be taken out beforehand, then they also must help prepare others for that event as well. It is important.

Having a good idea of what the word *tribulation* and the term *the Day of the Lord* indicate, a foundation can now be built. Instead of building upon

assumptions of what the words refer to, a strong Biblical case has been made for what the terms mean.

This foundation changes everything, and you may be asking yourself, “What then is the Great Tribulation if it isn’t the seven years of God’s wrath in Revelation?” This question will be answered in the following chapters.

## **Conclusion**

For the Premillennialist, every flaw in his belief structure regarding the Rapture, the End Times, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and his foundational understanding of Revelation is a direct result of a misunderstanding to what the word “*tribulation*” is referring.

Because of this initial misinterpretation, many Christians have completely misunderstood Matthew 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21; Revelation 4; and Revelation 6-7. This misunderstanding has given birth to all sorts of strange beliefs, assumptions, and presumptions of the Scriptures. Biblicists and Christians alike have had to twist them into the shape of their beliefs instead of allowing their beliefs to be converted into the shape of God’s Holy Word.

You will see that defining these two terms (*tribulation* and *the Day of the Lord*) correctly will eliminate any of the sub-beliefs of a Pre-tribulation, a Mid-tribulation, and a Post-tribulation Rapture. In fact, when the Rapture actually occurs becomes so obvious that you’ll be wondering why you missed it to begin with.

# 5

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## ANSWERING THE DISCIPLES’ FIRST QUESTION

**L**et’s start with perhaps the most controversial chapter regarding the Rapture and the term “Great Tribulation”: Matthew 24. It would be a good idea for you to read the entire chapter several times before reading further in this book. It would also behoove you to read Matthew 25 as well, since the subject matter does not end in chapter 24. Two other parallel passages should also be taken into consideration: Mark 13 and Luke 21.

To understand Matthew 24, you must realize the purpose of the chapter. You must also understand to whom Jesus was talking and what their thinking was. Jesus was talking to His disciples, and they retained the common Jewish belief that the Messiah, when He came, would free them from oppression and slavery—in this instance the Roman Empire (Luke 24:21).

Jesus had to dispel this idea in order for His disciples to fully understand what He was talking about. And that is the main purpose for much of *Matthew 24*. Jesus is trying to straighten their typically Jewish belief concerning the purpose of the Messiah.

Jesus begins this instruction in typical Christ-like fashion, by presenting a scenario that attacks the very core of their Jewish belief structure. At the beginning of the chapter, Jesus mentions that the symbol of Jewish faith and belief structure—the temple—would be utterly and completely destroyed.

The verse below seems almost prosaic in nature and doesn't explain the emotional impact it would have had on the disciples who heard it. But being Jews, they were profoundly affected by what Jesus had to say regarding the temple.

**Matthew 24:1-2** – *And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

This would have been incredibly distressing for these Jews to hear. The destruction of the temple—known then as Herod's Temple—seemed to defy reason. The Messiah was supposed to come and free them from tyranny, save the temple, and save the Jews—not allow the temple and their way of life perish! Troubled, the disciples soon come to Jesus and ask some questions regarding His statement concerning the temple. They ask:

**Matthew 24:3** – *And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*

They first wanted to know when the temple would be destroyed. They also wanted to know when Jesus would come again (most likely to be King and save them from the Romans), and they wanted to know when the end of world would come.

They were afraid. They did not like hearing about the destruction of the temple as that had shaken their understanding of what the Messiah was

supposed to do. So they asked Jesus when He would really *do* what they thought He *should* do.

Jesus takes the rest of chapter 24 and all of chapter 25 to answer these three questions. He dispels many of their faulty beliefs and tries to show them that their understanding of the Christ was also faulty. Let's look at the questions again:

1. "When shall these things be (the destruction of the temple)?"
2. "What shall be the sign of thy coming?"
3. "And of the end of the world?"

Immediately, those who believe that the Great Tribulation refers to the events in Revelation will run into problems because the first part of Jesus' explanation deals with the Tribulation—Jesus' words. This reply has created the assumption that Jesus answered the disciples' questions *out of order!*

But why would He do that? It actually makes no sense, but to get the Great Tribulation to fit what they want it to fit, many Premillennialists who believe in a Pre-tribulation Rapture must claim it is out of order.

My first thought on this matter would be *how confusing if Jesus did answer them out of order!* We would then have to guess which question was answered first, where it left off, and where the next one (whatever the next one would be) begins! It just isn't like Jesus, when speaking directly to His disciples, to give a confusing and a frustrating response—at least not for two entire chapters!

Jesus is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33)!

But the fact remains; many so called Pre-tribulationists do not believe that He answered the questions in order. The reason for this assumption is twofold:

1. Many think that the term “Great Tribulation” mentioned in verse 21 (and phrases mentioned in verses 6, 13, and 14) is in reference to Revelation. Therefore, they believe He started answering the last question first.
2. That His coming, or the Rapture, mentioned in verses 29-41 must come BEFORE this so called “Great Tribulation.” Therefore, they must believe He is answering these questions out of order; otherwise, they are wrong.

Interestingly enough, the Post-tribulationists believe Jesus did answer them in order, but only because they too believe that the Great Tribulation refers to the seven years of Revelation. They have come to believe that the Rapture happens at the end of that time, but before the Millennial Reign of Christ.

In both instances, it is the word “*tribulation*” and our understanding of it that has led to the disagreement and problem.

For both the Pre-tribulationist and the Post-tribulationist believers, I would like to ask one question: *When did Jesus answer the disciples’ first question about the destruction of the temple?*

In both beliefs, there is no room for the first question. Everything is about Revelation. That is a problem.

I believe Jesus answered these questions in the order that they were asked. To verify this, let us start with the beginning of the chapter and move all the way through it and through chapter 25. I believe that at the end, you will have no doubt that all three questions were not only answered, but answered in order!

### **Answering the First Question: Matthew 24:3-28**

Read Matthew 24:1-2. You will note that Jesus was shown the temple that was then in existence. It was of THAT temple that Jesus said, “*There*



*shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*” If Jesus was talking about THAT temple, He must have MEANT that temple.

We know from history that the Roman prince, Titus, destroyed THAT temple of Jesus’ day in 70 A.D. If Jesus was answering the first question first, He would be referring to Titus and the Roman army!

Let us see if the Scriptures bear out this explanation. Read Matthew 24:4-28. To whom is Jesus talking? He is talking to His disciples—specifically Peter, James, John, and Andrew (Mark 13:3).

Note that in Matthew 24:4, Jesus specifically says “you” in the verse. He starts by saying that the things that are going to happen will happen to THEM!

1. In *Matthew 24:6*, Jesus says, “ye.”
2. In *Matthew 24:9*, Jesus says, “deliver you up...”
3. In *Matthew 24:15*, Jesus says, “When ye therefore shall see....”
4. In *Matthew 24:20*, Jesus says, “ye.”
5. And in *Matthew 24:23*, Jesus again says, “You.”

As far as Jesus—and His disciples—were concerned, the events of which Jesus was speaking would be witnessed by them. They would be participants and spectators of them. It would only be about 40 years after the death of Jesus that Titus would come in, sack Jerusalem, and destroy it! That event isn’t so far away that many of the disciples wouldn’t witness it. That generation was still alive to see the temple destroyed!

The disciples, I believe, understood Jesus to mean *them* specifically. They would have continued on believing this and would look forward to the fulfillment of these promises—good or bad. It is no wonder that they believed Jesus would return in their day. They were looking for Him!

They all did.

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Let us look specifically at some of the verses:

<p><b>Matthew 24:9</b> – <i>Then shall they deliver <u>you</u> up to be afflicted, and shall kill <u>you</u>: and <u>ye</u> shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.</i></p>	<p><b>Mark 13:9</b> – <i>But take heed to <u>yourselves</u>: for they shall deliver <u>you</u> up to councils; and in the synagogues <u>ye</u> shall be beaten: and <u>ye</u> shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.</i></p>	<p><b>Luke 21:12-13</b> – <i>But before all these, they shall lay their hands on <u>you</u>, and persecute <u>you</u>, delivering <u>you</u> up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to <u>you</u> for a testimony.</i></p>
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Certainly, these predictions came true for the disciples of Jesus:

1. James was killed with the sword (Acts 12:2).
2. The entire church went into persecution and tribulation (Acts 8:1).

Of course, this type of persecution has been going on now for thousands of years. But Jesus was specifically talking to them—that they would suffer afflictions and martyrdom. Remember, they expected Jesus, the Messiah, to prevent such an outcome. They believed that when the Messiah came, He would rule and reign, creating a Jewish nation that would rule the world and free them from all oppression.

And now Jesus was telling them otherwise. This information was hard for them to hear, but it was necessary for them to hear it. Jesus wasn't ready to rule and reign. He first needed to die on the Cross for mankind's sins and redeem mankind from its sin nature.

Let's look at a few more verses:

<b>Matthew 24:13-14</b> – <i>But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.</i>	<b>Mark 13:10</b> – <i>And the gospel must first be published among all nations.</i>
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This appears to be somewhat confusing. Is Jesus really talking about the last question first—the one about the end of the world?

No! He is informing them that the “end” of this terrible tribulation—that is kicked off by the destruction of the temple—will only occur after the Gospel is preached to all nations. The Gospel must be spread everywhere before the end of this tribulation—and Jesus’ return—will occur.

This previous paragraph may sound that I am now in the Post-tribulationist camp. I am not. Remember, the word “*tribulation*” does not mean the seven years of Revelation. It means something else—a time of trouble that Jews and Christians will experience *before* the events in Revelation will occur.

**Matthew 24:6** – *And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*

Jesus is describing something terrible to these Jews—the destruction of the temple! Surely, Jesus will return to deliver them from such a fate—or so the disciples believed. It is the source of their question. Christ is forced to disabuse them of this erroneous belief:

**Matthew 24:2** – *And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

And then here:

**Matthew 24:23** – *Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.*

Christ explained to His disciples that He would not be returning to deliver them from the coming tribulation. He was trying to warn them that they WOULD suffer; they would go through “great tribulation.” The Gospel would have to be preached to the entire world before this troubling time would end.

Also note the change of the pronoun in verse 13. Instead of “you,” it is now “he.” That pronoun change could be significant if Jesus meant that they personally would not endure to see the end of that time—that they would not live long enough to see the end of this horrible tribulation of the Jews. The fact is they didn’t. The Jews have been under heavy persecution from 70 A.D. until today—nearly 2,000 years later.

Not every instance of the word *saved* deals with salvation as we understand it. It is a word that means “to deliver.” This word could be a reference to the Rapture itself. In other words, he who is alive at the end of this “great tribulation” will be *raptured* (saved) out.

Never has there been a time of tribulation on a people like the Jews or Christians have experienced. From 70 A.D. and on, Jews and Christians have been a hated people. Those who are—and have been—fortunate enough to live in the United States have been insulated from the horrors that our Christian brothers and sisters are living through. The world is turning against Christianity. If Jesus doesn’t come back, it is very possible that not a single Jew or Christian will survive (Matthew 24:22). Just turn on the news.

Some other verses to consider:

<p><b>Mark 13:11</b> – <i>But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.</i></p>	<p><b>Luke 21:14-15</b> – <i>Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.</i></p>
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Matthew makes no mention of this thought, but the thought must be included. Can anyone doubt that when Peter, James, John and Paul had all been hauled before counsels and kings that the Holy Ghost controlled them? Consider these verses: Acts 4:7-8; Acts 5:29-30; and Acts 7:54-55.

Do you not suppose that they suffered tribulation? These verses are all in regard to the tumultuous time that would follow the destruction of the temple—the Great Tribulation.

The following verses warn Christians to flee the persecution that will arise after the temple is destroyed. Rome had no place for Christianity; and when it finally was Christianized under Constantine, it became the Roman Catholic Church—the most bloodthirsty persecutors of Christianity that ever existed.

For some reason, people never look at the time in which they are now living. Are we not in a great tribulation? Naturally, you need to consider all of Christendom around the world; and when you do, you are left with little doubt. It is disturbing to say the least. And it is unprecedented.

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<p><b>Matthew 24:15-18</b> –  <i>When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.</i></p>	<p><b>Mark 13:14-16</b> –  <i>But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.</i></p>	<p><b>Luke 21:20-22</b> –  <i>And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.</i></p>
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Daniel speaks of 70 weeks (490 years) until certain prophecies are fulfilled. Here is a list of those prophecies found in Daniel 9:24:

1. “To finish the transgression”
2. “To make an end of sins”
3. “To make reconciliation for iniquity”
4. “To bring in everlasting righteousness”
5. “To seal up the vision and prophecy”
6. “To anoint the most Holy”

## ANSWERING THE DISCIPLES' FIRST QUESTION

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Some believe this verse is speaking of the events in Revelation, and that only the 1,000-year reign of Christ can fulfill these things. Thus the abomination of desolation must happen in the book of Revelation—not before it.

But there is another explanation, one that is much more profound and one that does not involve some fancy Scriptural footwork to achieve. *All of these prophecies have already been fulfilled by Jesus' ministry and death on the Cross.* Jesus finished the transgression, made an end of sin by His death, reconciled us to God, brought in His eternal righteousness, fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecy, and was anointed at His baptism.

Luke gives us a further understanding of this fact. Notice that instead of “abomination of desolation,” he says, “Jerusalem compassed with armies.” This wording is yet another reference to the Roman Prince Titus. Notice that those will be the days of vengeance on Jerusalem—not of the entire world! Keep in mind that Jesus is talking to His disciples. He means that they shall witness these events. They did.

Now, here are the key verses:

<b>Matthew 24:19-22</b> – <i>And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: <u>For then shall be great tribulation</u>, such as was not since the beginning of the</i>	<b>Mark 13:17-20</b> – <i>But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. <u>For in those days shall be affliction</u>, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God</i>	<b>Luke 21:23-24</b> – <i>But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! <u>for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.</u> And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into</i>
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THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

<p><i>world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.</i></p>	<p><i>created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.</i></p>	<p><i>all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.</i></p>
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These verses describe the Great Tribulation' and what that tribulation is.

These are among the more confusing passages. Biblicists have implied that these passages refer to the chaos and destruction mentioned in Revelation. There are several problems with that assumption:

1. The Great Tribulation that is mentioned is in reference to JEWS and CHRISTIANS only.
2. Luke tells us that the “wrath” is on *this* people (Jews).
3. Luke explains that the “great tribulation” begins when the Jews are led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem will be trodden down of the Gentiles and that is the Great Tribulation!
4. The events described in Matthew 24:19-22 and Luke 21:23-24 all happened in 70 A.D. when Titus destroyed Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and scattered the Jews.

Follow this: The Great Tribulation is a persecution of Christians and Jews for nearly 2,000 years as of this writing! There have never been a



people (Jews and Christian alike) who have suffered so much persecution and retained their identities for so long.

Where are the Edomites, the Philistines, the Moabites, the Huns, the Hittites, or the Ammonites? They're gone. Their culture, their religions have been swallowed up by conquerors and time.

Only the Jews have retained their identity through thousands of years of persecution and homelessness. There has never been anything like it in history, and I dare say, neither will there ever be anything like it in the future.

Imagine that for nearly 2,000 years you have been persecuted, hunted, ridiculed, dispossessed, and rejected. Hitler was out to exterminate all of your people and killed millions. The bubonic plague was blamed on you. You were the justification for the Crusades—to recapture the Holy Land and punish the murderers of Jesus Christ—you. And even in this enlightened period, nearly half of the world would love nothing better than to see you and your people exterminated from the face of the world. Imagine if the prejudice was so intense and great toward you that a whole new word was invented just to describe it: anti-Semitic! Imagine millions, if not billions, of people believing that you and your race were vermin—a black plague in the world. Imagine living in nearly every country in the world, born there, grew up there, and yet unable to identify with it because you are a Jew and will always be a Jew, and no birthplace, no culture, and no amount of money could or would ever change it.

Honestly, if Jesus doesn't come back soon, no Jew or Christian will survive the Great Tribulation. Jesus told His disciples that their people will be under such persecution and such tribulation that, if He didn't cut it short, not one of them would survive.

To this day, the world, by and large, is set against Jews and Christians. If public sentiment doesn't change directions, the situation will only get worse, and unless God shortens these days, no Jew or Christian will

survive. Worse yet, conditions could get so bad that the entire world kills itself off—possibly in a nuclear holocaust. If Jesus doesn't come back soon, then this scenario may very well happen! Literally, no one will survive.

Not even during Revelation will a people suffer like the Jews have for 2,000 years. Remember, Revelation has a time frame of only seven years. They are two completely unique sets of troubles, and there never will be a tribulation on a people (not in history and not in the future) like this again. As of this writing, the Jews are still under heavy persecution and tribulation—not only in the tiny piece of real estate called Israel, but across the entire world.

Indeed, Christians also suffer much as well.

### **How long will this Great Tribulation Last?**

All this is to last until “the times of the Gentiles” is fulfilled. That time frame is the key. God gives us something very specific and very tangible to look at in regard to this time frame. Observe:

**Luke 21:23-24** – *But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

Today, at the time of this writing, Jerusalem is not in Israel's complete control. In fact, only about half of the Promised Land is in Israel's control, and the temple mount has a Muslim mosque built on top of it.

So, the Gentiles, or non-Jews, are still trampling down Jerusalem. The “times of the Gentiles” is not yet fulfilled, and until it is, the Great Tribulation will continue.

Some prefer to call this time the church age since the Gospel has been handed to the church which is made up primarily of Gentiles. It is the church's duty to spread the Gospel. Once the Gospel has been spread to all nations (in fulfillment of Matthew 24:14), then the tribulation of the Jews and Christians will cease—probably in the form of the Rapture.

With the advent of the Internet, that day could be upon us. Soon everyone will have access, either directly or through a hack, to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Don't forget that Christianity, by extension, has been under persecution for nearly as long as the Jews have. For many years, the Roman government treated Christianity as a branch of Judaism. So it can be argued that we as Christians will suffer persecution as well as the Jews. The world has proven that. Just read history. In fact, Paul understood this and exhorted converts in Acts 14:22 that they would suffer much "tribulation" before they entered into the kingdom of God.

In conclusion, the first part of Matthew 24 is an answer to the first question—about the destruction of the temple and the Great Tribulation that would be set off as a result. There has never been, and never will be, a tribulation of a people (both Jews and Christians) of such magnitude. Surely, this is the Great Tribulation.

## **How Does This Help My Understanding of Revelation?**

In many ways:

1. You don't have to read the verses of Matthew 24 out of order to make sense of them. You can read them line upon line and precept upon precept!
2. It makes much more sense when verse 29 of Matthew 24 says that the Rapture will happen after the tribulation of those days. The Rapture is every believer's deliverance from this Tribulation—the Tribulation we are currently living!

3. Revelation 7:9-14 talks about a multitude of people that had come out of “great tribulation,” which makes sense if that tribulation is comprised of nearly 2,000 years of Christians.
4. It frees us up from building even more assumptions on top of assumptions. Bad theology is usually bad at its roots. If this one concept is wrong, then so will be the theology that springs from it.
5. This is the simple answer, and simple is always better!

## **Conclusion**

The Great Tribulation is the time period between 70 A.D. and the Rapture. Until Jesus returns, we are currently living in this Great Tribulation.

When looking at the Great Tribulation from that perspective, many of the verses make sense. These verses no longer need to be twisted to fit a concept or a theology. In fact, if each of the three sub-beliefs of Premillennialism would agree on these definitions, then it would eliminate nearly *all* of their problems with each other.

Not having to attribute the word “*tribulation*” to Revelation frees us to see how Revelation is truly presented to us and to the world.

# 6

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## ANSWERING THE DISCIPLES' SECOND QUESTION

**T**he second question is in regard to Jesus' second coming. In effect, the disciples were hoping that if Jesus wasn't intending to prevent the destruction of the temple, then they were hoping He intended to return again at some point and do all the things that were expected of the Messiah. They wanted to know when that would happen.

Jesus takes time to point out that He would not spare them from the coming tribulation, but that He would indeed return one day.

I suppose this message brought them comfort, and indeed, many of the disciples, including the apostle Paul, assumed that Jesus would return in their lifetime. In fact, I believe Jesus could have. More on this later as well.

When will Jesus return? What will His Second Coming be like? What marks it? These are good questions. Let's see what Jesus has to say.

### **Answering the Second Question: Matthew 24:29-25:30**

Take a look at the following verses. They make a clear distinction between the "tribulation of those days" and the coming of Jesus Christ:

**Matthew 24:29-31** – *Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

If one believes that the Great Tribulation is in reference to the seven years mentioned in Revelation, then Matthew 24:29 throws quite a wrench in the wheels of the Pre-tribulation Rapture believer. It does seem to verify the Post-tribulation belief. But as I have already established—and I hope clearly—the “tribulation” does not refer to that time period but to what the church has suffered since 70 A.D.

According to the above verses, the Rapture will not happen until the Tribulation is complete—“the times of the Gentiles” is fulfilled.

I have heard some whopper explanations from Pre-tribulation believers to get around these verses. Some have even gone so far as to say that the verses don’t really refer to the Rapture at all, but rather to the Millennial Reign of Christ.

At the time of the Rapture, the Bible gives us an extremely clear picture of the events that either immediately precede it or happen simultaneously with it. In fact, one could simply state that all of the below events IS the Rapture.

Notice the events that occur with His coming (or the Rapture):

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1. "After the tribulation of those days..."
2. "The sun will be darkened."
3. "The moon shall not give her light."
4. "Heavens shaken (earthquake)..."
5. "Everyone shall see Him."
6. "He will come in the clouds."
7. "There will be the sound of a trumpet."
8. "The Christians (elect) will be gathered into Heaven."
9. "It will happen as suddenly and unexpectedly as the rain came in Noah's day."

Let us compare these happenings to some of the other Scriptures regarding the Rapture.

<p><b>1 Corinthians 15:51-52</b> – <i>Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.</i></p>	<p><b>1 Thessalonians 4:16-17</b> – <i>For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.</i></p>
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Now let us see a comparison chart of what we know about the Rapture:

THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

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<b>Events of the Rapture</b>	<b>Matt 24</b>	<b>1 Cor 15</b>	<b>1 Thess 4</b>
Tribulation	✓		
Sun darkened	✓		
Moon darkened / became blood	✓		
Stars fall	✓		
Earthquake	✓		
Every eye shall see and wail	✓		
Clouds	✓		✓
Trumpet sounds	✓	✓	✓
Unexpectedly like Noah	✓	✓	
Dead resurrected		✓	✓
Christians disappear	✓	✓	✓

By far, the most detailed description of the Rapture is Matthew 24. The others agree with Matthew 24 but do not go into as much detail. Therefore Matthew 24 will be our Rapture foundation to which we will compare all other Scriptures.

To add to the confusion, some Pre-tribulationists believe that Matthew 24:29-31 has nothing to do with the Rapture—in spite of verses like Matthew 24:36-51.

The reason for this erroneous belief is twofold. First, verse 29 uses the phrase “after the tribulation of those days.” Therefore, since they believe that the rapture happens BEFORE what they call the Tribulation, they have determined that the verses which follow verse 29 cannot refer to the Rapture. Instead, they believe that these verses refer to the end of the seven years of Revelation (Revelation 19:11-21). But if that is the case, then Jesus is coming back an additional time that cannot be accounted for and is found in Matthew 25:31-46!



Of course, Matthew 25 is still part of the Day of the Lord and, in my opinion, is still irrevocably tied to the Rapture. Therefore, it is still the Second Coming of Jesus. The entire Day of the Lord is Jesus' preparation for the 1,000-year reign of Christ. The first time is His birth, the second time is in Matthew 24 where He gathers His saints (this is the Rapture and He allows all the terrible things to happen on earth for seven years, and finally He then returns with His saints to set up the Millennial Reign.

This error is based on the misuse of the word “tribulation” which has already been addressed. Matthew 24:4-28 does not deal with the seven years of the Day of the Lord at all. If anything, it would be easily paralleled with the seals. More on that later.

In addition, another controversial verse casts great doubt on their belief:

**Matthew 24:34** – *Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*

The above verse seems like it is saying that the generation of the disciples would see the fulfillment of much of Matthew 24. I believe it is referring to the “things” or “signs” of Jesus' coming—that everything that would need to be done before Jesus could come back would be fulfilled in the disciples' generation. I believe that happened in 70 A.D. *Please see Appendix A for a detailed explanation of this verse.*

Returning to the Rapture, I believe I have firmly established that the best description of the Rapture is to be found in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. This book will concentrate on Matthew as it gives the most details about this event. With that groundwork in mind, Scripture needs to be found in Revelation that will match, as close as possible, the description mentioned in Matthew 24. Only three passages of Scripture in Revelation can possibly be a description of the Rapture:

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<p><b>Revelation 4:1-2</b> – <i>After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.</i></p>	<p><b>Revelation 6:12-17</b> – <i>And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?</i></p>	<p><b>Revelation 11:11-13</b> – <i>And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.</i></p>
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Let's look at a comparison of all these Scriptures:

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Events of the Rapture	Mat 24	1 Cor 15	1 Thess 4	Rev 4	Rev 6	Rev 11
After tribulation	✓					
Sun darkened	✓				✓	
Moon darkened	✓				✓	
Earthquake	✓				✓	✓
Stars fall	✓				✓	
Every eye shall see and wail	✓				✓	
Clouds	✓		✓			✓
Trumpet	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Unexpectedly like Noah	✓	✓			✓	
Dead resurrected		✓	✓			✓
Christians disappear	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

An examination of each passage in context should now be done. Keep in mind that all Scripture must agree. Only one of these passages can be a description of the Rapture. In Matthew 24, the disciples asked for the sign of His coming (or of the Rapture) when He would free His people from oppression and set up His rule. By process of elimination, Matthew 24, as described by Jesus, tells exactly how the Rapture will occur.

If then that description can be found in Revelation, it would weigh heavily in favor of pinpointing where the Rapture occurs in the book of Revelation.

*Of the three passages, the one in Revelation 6 has the most similarities.*

We will first, however, look at the other two passages.

## Is Revelation 4:1-2 Addressing the Rapture?

Revelation 4:1-2 has often been viewed as the Rapture by many people—particularly by those who have traditionally called themselves Pre-tribulation believers.

Here is their reasoning:

- There is a trumpet.
- There is a snatching away.
- The church is no longer mentioned in the book of Revelation.

Although this Scripture is a type of rapture as defined by the word itself, it is really difficult to see how all this fits in with Matthew 24. Other than the trumpet and John’s finding of himself in Heaven spiritually, there is no other positive description of the Rapture anywhere near Revelation 4.

Let me point out several things. To begin with, other people in the Bible have had similar experiences as John has had.

- Ezekiel, for example, had two such experiences (Ezekiel 8:1-3 and Ezekiel 37:1-3). Both are similar in nature, although a trumpet is not mentioned in Ezekiel. No one will ever claim that Ezekiel represents the rapture of ALL the saints.
- Then there is Enoch who “...walked with God: and he was not; for God took him”—another rapture of sorts.
- Don’t forget about Elijah who was caught up into Heaven in a chariot of fire—another rapture, yet no one can say that this was the rapture of all the saints.
- What about the two witnesses in Revelation 11? They were raptured, and there WAS a voice that said the same thing to them that John heard—“come up thither.” Certainly John’s experience was a type of *rapture* as

defined by the word, but it could just as easily have been a personal experience.

John heard a trumpet. Yes, but he also heard a trumpet in Revelation 1:10. Is either the Rapture? It doesn't say, and that's the problem—the Bible doesn't say.

One of the keywords in Revelation 4:1 is the word “hereafter.” Jesus had told John in Revelation 1:19 to write what John “has seen” (chapter 1 of Revelation) and “the things which are” (chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation) and “the things which shall be hereafter” (chapters 4-22 of Revelation). A determination has to be made about what the word *hereafter* means. In other words, does it refer to *after* the church is gone (the church isn't mentioned after chapter 3), or does it mean *after* John's life or experience, or *after* that moment in time that Jesus was talking with John? The answer to this question has already been discussed in chapter 3 of this book.

I believe it is obvious that “hereafter” is referring to AFTER John, or AFTER that particular moment in time of the discussion Jesus had with John. Thus a strong argument against this passage of Scripture as being the Rapture becomes apparent. Others have had a similar experience as John had (including the two witnesses in Revelation 11). Therefore, to be consistent, a personal experience does not constitute a rapture of ALL believers.

The precedent is that of a personal experience that only John had at the time of his visions. Equating his personal experience with the future Rapture doesn't make sense, considering that, for John, the Rapture was still far in the future.

Indeed, even poking around the other verses in chapter 4, there is no other evidence that this could be the Rapture. There is no body of believers that appear in Heaven, and neither is there any earthly evidence of this being the Rapture.

Other than the trumpet and John's personal spiritual ascension into Heaven, there is NO other semblance to the Rapture described in Matthew 24.

### **Is Revelation 11:11-13 the Rapture?**

Revelation 11:11-13 shares some of the aspects of the Rapture described in Matthew 24. The two witnesses are killed, brought back to life, and ascend into Heaven in a cloud—a very similar experience to John's. However, both of the witnesses were dead and had been brought back to life. In this case, there is an earthquake, but it appears to be after they ascend and not before as described in Matthew 24, which could be an irrelevant point, however.

Even with reading before and after these verses, no other description of the Rapture is mentioned. There is no further semblance to Matthew 24. Other than the two witnesses, there is no mention of anyone else being raptured at this time, which would be the case according to Matthew 24:40-41.

The arguments that claim this would be the Rapture are as weak as that for Revelation 4:1-2. It is largely based on assumption. Here is the question: Where does it say or show that there has been a raptured body of believers? It does not.

The student of the Bible needs to remember that ALL Scripture will agree and that he must take what is said for face value—unless otherwise directed by God elsewhere.

### **Is the Sixth Seal the Rapture (Revelation 6:12-17)?**

More than any other passage in the book, Revelation 6:12-17 contains the closest description to the Rapture mentioned in Matthew 24.

But is it *the* Rapture? Scripture must agree. By examining the context of this passage of Scripture, any other similarity to Matthew 24 can be noted.

To begin with, please take note that this passage is the sixth seal of a book that Jesus is opening (see Revelation chapter 5). Therefore, there are events that take place before this seal is opened.

Many scholars have made much of the first four seals and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Some Biblicists endeavor to show how all four are representative of either Satan or the Antichrist. Some believe the Horsemen represent Jesus Christ. However, much of this will be rectified easily when considered in light of our new definitions of the words “*tribulation*” and “*the Day of the Lord.*”

The sixth seal quickly reveals several qualities that are similar to that of Matthew 24’s Rapture. It mentions the sun, moon, stars, earthquake, and everyone sees Jesus—just as is described in Matthew 24. But are there other similarities? Let’s take each missing description and see if we can locate them in the context of this passage:

**AFTER SOME SORT OF TRIBULATION:** As has been stated, this “tribulation” involves the Jews and the church. If you read the verses in the first four seals (Revelation 6:1-12) and compare them to the description of the Great Tribulation given in Matthew 24:4-28, you will find significant similarities—uncanny similarities, in fact. Jesus even bade the souls in Heaven to wait a little season to await the other Christians who would be killed (the fifth seal). So if Revelation 6:12-17 is the Rapture, it DOES come after some type of earthly “tribulation.”

**CLOUDS:** Revelation 1:7 provides the answer to this: “*Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.*” It is clear that when He comes every eye will see Him. This dramatic event doesn’t occur until the sixth seal in Revelation 6:12-17. So when He does come and everyone shall see Him, He will come in the clouds according to Revelation 1:7. This passage matches the description in Matthew 24.

**TRUMPET:** There is no record of a trumpet in Revelation 6 or 7. Of course, an assumption could be made based on other Scripture that any time Jesus spoke, it sounded like a trumpet (Revelation 1:10), but this would be an assumption and is not solid ground. It is interesting, however, to note that there are SEVEN trumpets that begin in chapter 8 of Revelation! Matthew 24:31 says, “*And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*” Note the use of the word “*angels*” in the plural tense. Where in the book of Revelation can angels (plural) blowing trumpets be found? Revelation 8! Is this coincidence? Perhaps, but a judge must rule in favor of the person who can provide the greatest burden of proof.

**DEAD RESURRECTED AND CHRISTIANS DISAPPEAR:** The answer can be found in chapter 7 of Revelation, which is a continuation of the sixth seal. (The seventh seal isn’t opened until chapter 8.) It is interesting that immediately after the sixth seal is opened, 144,000 Jews are sealed. It would take another book to describe God’s promise to reclaim Israel. Basically, however, God has made several covenants with Abraham, David, and Israel. These He will keep in due time—probably when the church (“the time of the Gentiles”) is gone! The duty of spreading the Gospel was given to the church. Once the church is taken away, God will turn back to the nation of Israel. This doesn’t happen until the sixth seal, so the church must certainly be gone or raptured by that time.

However, this is not the sole proof. Look at Revelation 7:9:

**Revelation 7:9** – *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.*

It is interesting that it is not until the sixth seal that John sees a body of believers in Heaven! They weren’t there before, but now they are. How



do I know? Because Revelation 7:13 and 14 says that they came out of “Great Tribulation.”

This wording is significant. Before this point, only a few people were witnessed in Heaven. But now, after the sixth seal is opened, an innumerable body of believers is now seen in Heaven. Look what the elder says to John in inquiring about this great multitude:

**Revelation 7:13-14** – *And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

John is asked “...and whence came they?” or in today’s vernacular, “Where did they come from?” They weren’t there, and now they are. They came out of “great tribulation.” This is similar to Matthew 24:29 that states, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days...”

The words “*came out*” are suggestive of the Rapture, don’t you think?

Also remember that Matthew 24:21 mentions the same phrase “great tribulation.” What a wonderful match!

Some would argue that these are those who were saved during the seven years of Revelation—or what I call the Day of the Lord. My problem with that supposition is simple. The Bible states that there were so many that they could not be numbered. To be honest, that sounds more like all the saints throughout all history than it does of those who were saved during the Day of the Lord. Most Bible scholars agree that only a few people will turn to Christ during the Day of the Lord—certainly not enough to justify an innumerable group of believers.

Since John saw this body of people in Heaven, it would be BOTH the raptured folk and the resurrected folk who are described in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

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Let's take a look at The Events of the Rapture chart now:

<b>Events of the Rapture</b>	<b>Matthew 24</b>		<b>Revelation 6-7</b>	
After tribulation	✓	Mat 24:29	✓	Rev 6:1-11
Sun darkened	✓	Mat 24:29	✓	Rev 6:12
Moon darkened	✓	Mat 24:29	✓	Rev 6:12
Earthquake	✓	Mat 24:29	✓	Rev 6:12
Stars fall	✓	Mat 24:29	✓	Rev 6:13
Every eye shall see	✓	Mat 24:30	✓	Rev 6:15-17
Clouds	✓	Mat 24:31	✓	Rev 1:7 with 6:15-17
Angels and trumpet	✓	Mat 24:31	✓	Rev 8
Unexpectedly like Noah	✓	Mat 24:28	✓	Rev 6:16
Dead resurrected			✓	Rev 7:9-14
Christians disappear	✓	Mat 24:40-41	✓	Rev 7:9-14

The chart is reconciled, is it not? Between Matthew 24 and Revelation 6 and 7, the likeness is so acute that more than anywhere else in the book of Revelation, the Rapture occurs in the sixth seal!

The resurrection of the dead is the only event missing, but even that could be conjectured from the body of innumerable saints that John witnessed in Heaven. It would be hard to imagine that there were so many saints raptured to justify calling them innumerable.

For those of you still balking with the concept, let me say that the method presented here of comparing Scripture to Scripture is probably how you do the rest of your Bible studying. If you find two passages of Scripture that so agree, you automatically believe that they are related. Since you do that with the rest of your Bible studying, why is it so difficult to apply that method in this case?

To beat a dead horse into the ground, for those who still hold that the word “tribulation” refers to the seven years of Revelation, the Mid-tribulationists get their position from this passage of the sixth seal. They

believe that the seven years started in the first seal, and this seal takes place half way through the Tribulation.

But again, by redefining the word “*tribulation*” scripturally, this view is eliminated. However, it does bring up a valid point. Where does the Day of the Lord start? Where does the seven years start? I’ll address those questions in chapter 8.

## **Conclusion**

I have shown how the sixth seal is nearly identical to the Rapture as described in Matthew 24. To pinpoint an exact location in Revelation about which one can say, “See, here is the Rapture,” requires significant Scriptural proof to make that claim. That Scriptural proof is found in the passages addressing the sixth seal.

Once the student of the Bible no longer worries about the word “*tribulation*” being the seven years of Revelation, he no longer has to worry about trying to cram Scriptures into a predetermined belief. He is now free to study the Scriptures as they were intended to be studied—line upon line and comparing Scripture to Scripture to see agreement.

The disciples’ second question about the Second Coming of Christ has been answered by Christ. Jesus details the events that surround the Rapture in Matthew 24.

# 7

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## ANSWERING THE DISCIPLES' THIRD QUESTION

**T**he disciples were naturally curious about the end of the world. They were familiar with Old Testament prophecies describing a paradise world—a world in which the Messiah would rule forever. The disciples wanted this to happen as all the Jews did. They believed that Jesus was the Messiah, so they believed He would be responsible for the end of the world and ushering in the new world.

### **Answering the Third Question: Matthew 25:31-46**

If you examine the verses here, you will see a fascinating parallel with the final judgment in Revelation. Observe:

**Matthew 25:31** – *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:*

**Revelation 19:11-14** – *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed*

ANSWERING THE DISCIPLES' THIRD QUESTION

	<i>with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God...</i>
<b>Matthew 25:32</b> – <i>And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:</i>	<b>Revelation 20:11-12</b> – <i>And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.</i>
<b>Matthew 25:34</b> – <i>Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:</i>	<b>Revelation 21:6-7</b> – <i>And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.</i>
<b>Matthew 25:41</b> – <i>Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:</i>	<b>Revelation 21:8</b> – <i>But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.</i>

The third question is about the end of the world. The end of the world is an interesting concept. It could mean literally the END of the world, or it could be the passing of one age into the next. But if we are looking at Scripture, and the verses in the latter part of Matthew 25 describe the end of the world, then we must conclude that the end of the world is the final judgment that is described at the end of Revelation. Note the following verse:

**Revelation 21:1** – *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

Matthew 25 speaks of judgment, and so do the final chapters after the Millennial Reign of Christ. It appears, therefore, that Jesus did indeed answer all three questions. In fact, He answered them not only in the order in which they were asked, but in the chronological order of events that would occur.

## Conclusion

Here is a rough comparison of the Scriptures in Matthew 24 to Revelation as they relate to the three questions asked by the disciples:

- Matthew 24:4-28 corresponds roughly to Revelation 6:1-11 (First Question)
- Matthew 24:29 to Matthew 25:30 corresponds roughly to Revelation 6:12 to Revelation 7:17 (Second Question)
- Matthew 25:31-46 corresponds roughly to Revelation 19:1-21 (Third Question)

These correlations between Matthew and Revelation help clarify the relationship between them in regards to exactly what the Great Tribulation is, what the Day of the Lord is, and what the Rapture is.

## ANSWERING THE DISCIPLES' THIRD QUESTION

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Now, the next question is where does the Rapture occur in relation to the Day of the Lord? Does the Rapture take place before the seven years or not? To answer that question, the seals must be examined in order to discover whether or not the seals are actually a part of the seven years of the Day of the Lord or not.

# 8

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## WHERE THE DAY OF THE LORD BEGINS

**N**ow that the most likely place in Revelation for the Rapture to occur has been established, where the Day of the Lord begins must also be determined.

For the better part of two centuries, professed doctrine among Premillennialists held that the seals began the seven years of Revelation—that to which I refer as the Day of the Lord.

The Pre-tribulationist doctrine is actually a rather new belief that was first proposed by one John Nelson Darby (1800-1882).<sup>2</sup> Darby is known as the father of dispensationalism,<sup>3</sup> the belief that God deals with different periods of history in different ways, making a previous “dispensation” un-relatable to the current dispensation. In other words, major doctrines from one dispensation are not compatible with major doctrines from another dispensation.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.theopedia.com/Premillennialism](http://www.theopedia.com/Premillennialism) (12/28/2013).

<sup>3</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Nelson\\_Darby](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Nelson_Darby) (12/28/2013).



Darby first proposed a Pre-tribulation Rapture based on his dispensational theology. In effect, he believed that the seven years of Revelation is a new dispensation, and the church must be raptured out beforehand (based on 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10) to usher in that new dispensation. Thus was born the notion that Revelation 4:1 was the Rapture as it seemed the most likely candidate before the obvious tribulation of the first four seals.

As seen upon comparing Scripture to Scripture, the most likely candidate for the Rapture in Revelation is the sixth seal found in Revelation 6 and 7. This is *where* the Rapture takes place. The question is whether or not the seven years or the Day of the Lord has already begun. Has it?

Recall that the Day of the Lord will be a time for God to pour out His *wrath* on a world that has rejected Him, His Son, His Word, and His people. There is a Biblical precedent for this in Noah's day (Genesis 6).

If, indeed, as many people believe, the first seal represents the beginning of the Great Tribulation, then it would seem that the Rapture happens sometime after it begins. However, some substantial problems arise with this belief:

1. A case can easily be made that the first four seals are already opened, or that when they open, no one would give it a second thought because similar events have occurred historically that, by comparison, are just as disastrous.
2. The souls of the martyred Christians, in the fifth seal, ask when God will pour out His wrath on the world. He says not for some time. They then DO NOT think that God has started His vengeance yet.
3. Those who are on the earth do not consider the first five seals to be the wrath of God. Only when they see God do they think His wrath is coming.

4. The book that contains the wrath of God is not opened yet—not until the seventh seal is finally broken.
5. The seven trumpets are so obviously the wrath of God in contrast to the seven seals.

I wish to make the case that the seals do not represent the Day of the Lord (the seven years of God’s wrath). I believe that we are living in the midst of the seals today, and that it is more than possible that many of the seals have already been opened.

*In fact, I would go so far as to say that the seals are the Great Tribulation mentioned in Matthew 24—but not the seven years of the Day of the Lord.*

This view would be consistent with the rest of the Scripture. I would like to take a detailed look at the first five seals mentioned in Revelation 6:1-11.

## **The First Seal**

**Revelation 6:1-2** – *And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.*

A casual glance at the news will prove that we live in an uncertain world where the threat of war ever looms on the horizon. Nations continue to threaten nation. The desire to conquer has been around since the flood in Noah’s day. This has always been the case—even in Jesus’ day.

Communism tried to conquer, capitalism tried to conquer, democracy is trying to conquer, and Islam is trying to conquer. Hitler tried to take over all of Europe, but then so did Attila. There have always been conquerors *after* the Roman Empire: consider the British Empire and the Soviet Union. Then there has been Charlemagne, Napoleon, Genghis Khan, Barbarossa, and many others. At the time of this writing, the Palestinians

are trying to destroy and take over Israel, China is threatening Taiwan, North Korea has declared the 1953 cease-fire agreement null and void, and Islamic extremists are trying to take over the world in the name of Allah. If this seal hasn't already been opened, then when it is opened, no one will notice anything unusual about it.

There has been much discussion of about WHO is riding on this white horse. Revelation 19:11 and 12 says that Jesus rode on a white horse and that Jesus received many crowns. The parallel is striking. Is this Jesus? Personally, I don't think so. Others believe that this person IS the Antichrist, since he tries to duplicate Jesus. I'm not so sure of that explanation either. 1 John 4:3 talks about the spirit of Antichrist, and that might be another interpretation as well. The arguments for all three theories are merely supposition and guesswork.

The purpose of this work is not to go verse by verse and explain everything. The purpose of this book is to give the Bible student the right approach. You can't end well if you don't begin well.

But by examining history and trying to find an event or events that would exactly match the first seal, relatively soon after Jesus' death, the Holy Roman Empire would be a likely candidate. The Roman Empire, sanctioned by the Catholic Church, began to go forth and conquer in Jesus' name within 400 years of Jesus' death. The Catholic Church, historically, has not been exclusively a spiritual entity. In fact, she is largely political and, even this day, the Vatican City is considered to be its own nation.

The Catholic Church ruled nations. Merely the threat of a papal interdict would force kings of nations to submit to the Pope. Constantine, one of the emperors of Rome, established Catholicism as the main religion of the Roman Empire. He then, in Jesus' name, went forth to battle. This led to the domination of Europe by the Catholic Church and eventually to the Crusades and even, later, to the conquistadors.

I am merely speculating, while trying to prove that this seal could very well have already been opened.

If the book of seals represents the time of the Great Tribulation (from 70 A.D. to the Rapture), one would expect that the first seal could have been opened sometime after 70 A.D.

Is it opened? I don't know. I believe it to be, but like anyone else who tries to attribute historical events to Revelation, I am guessing. Yes, I believe the guess to be an incredibly good one, but I am willing to admit that I might be wrong.

## The Second Seal

**Revelation 6:3-4** – *And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.*

Shortly after the Catholic Church came into power in Rome, the Roman Empire was fractured and eventually destroyed by invading barbarians. This event plummeted most of the known world into the Dark Ages, a time of extreme violence and war. Robber barons would terrorize the surrounding countryside. Nations would be frequently at war with each other. The popes, in bids to consolidate their power, would send men on crusades to the Holy Land to reclaim the land from Muslim nations. It was a time where the only power was the power of violence.

Throughout these so-called civilized nations, violence, war, death, murder, and killing was the order of the day. At this time, the average life span of an adult male was only around 32 years of age; they didn't die of old age. Most died of violence or disease.

And even today, little peace can be found on the earth. You can go to almost any part of the world and see countries at odds with each other.

There is a peace movement today, but it is helpless. People simply don't like each other, and there is no harmony; peace is largely gone. Let me ask you, why do you lock your door at night? Why aren't you at peace?

During the Dark Ages, the Roman Catholic Church murdered anyone who promoted any other doctrine than their own, putting them to torture, beheading them, and burning them at the stake.

Might the Dark Ages have been the second seal? Could be. The point is, nothing about it is unusual as far as history is concerned. If the Dark Ages happened today, few would believe the world had entered the seven years of Revelation—the Day of the Lord.

It is interesting to note that the Dark Ages follows closely the fall of the Roman Empire. Though other areas of the world were not in the Dark Ages (Muslim nations for example and possibly China), Christianity and the Jews were most certainly so.

### **The Third Seal**

**Revelation 6:5-6** – *And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.*

During the Dark Ages, and especially on into the Middle Ages, a division of wealth was established. A caste system, if you will, divided the poor from the rich and sought to keep it that way. A measure of wheat for a penny represented a man's wages for a single day's work. Oil and wine were luxury items as well as symbols of the rich.

People in the Middle Ages were born into a class or caste and were then encouraged to stay there. A serf was always a serf. A nobleman was always a nobleman. It wasn't until the High Middle or late Middle Ages

that the merchant class appeared on the scene. The merchants were the first of the future middle class. But for hundreds of years, there was no such thing as a middle class.

I believe this seal represents the disparaging differences between the poor and the rich.

For much of the world today, this is still true. Today's world is a world of commerce. In fact, the Persian Gulf War was primarily over oil and the effect that oil would have on various economies—making it a national security issue (“Hurt not the oil.”). Nations have access to more now than ever before. Poverty still exists, but by and large, every nation is richer; however, the majority of people are still poor.

When this seal is opened (if it hasn't already), no one will notice anything different than what is being seen already today! Even the middle class in industrialized nations (such as the U.S., the U.K., Russia, and China) is slowly dying out.

Was the third seal opened during the Middle Ages? Possibly. Regardless, if it hasn't been opened and when it is, no one will recognize that something unique has happened.

## The Fourth Seal

**Revelation 6:7-8** – *And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.*

Notice what this passage DOES NOT say. It does not say that a fourth of the population will be destroyed or killed. It says there was given power OVER the fourth part of the earth TO kill.

It is impossible for me to list one event in history that would fit this seal. There are several. Genghis Khan, for example, conquered more than a quarter of the world. World War I and II saw more than a quarter of the world plunged into war, famine, and destruction. The bubonic plague of the Middle Ages wiped out a third of the entire population of Europe, and the disease was spread mainly by rats.

If I had to select only one event, I would choose the pair of World Wars. These two wars brought devastation, disease, hunger, and many other terrors to nearly the entire world. Millions upon millions of people were slaughtered in the first half of the twentieth century. This could have very well been the fourth seal.

Can I prove it. No. And it is not important to me that I can. The point I am trying to make is that when the seal is opened—assuming it hasn't been opened yet, it will not be anything the world has not already seen. We've already witnessed similar events.

## The Fifth Seal

**Revelation 6:9-11** – *And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*

This seal takes place only in Heaven, so it is impossible to say whether or not it has been opened. This fits, since Jesus told us that we cannot know the day or the hour of His return. Not knowing when this seal is opened can very well make it impossible to predict Christ's return.

John sees the souls of the martyred saints the moment the seal is opened. They wonder WHEN God will pour out His wrath on the world. They obviously don't consider what has happened in the first four seals to be the wrath or judgment of God. It is only in the sixth seal that the people on the earth realize that God is about to pour out His wrath on them.

If the book of seals that the Lamb is opening contains the wrath of God in it, it is worthy to note that the book isn't opened until Revelation 8. What is this book? Daniel chapter 12 might contain a hint. There seems to be a book that is sealed unto the end. Only when the end comes will the book be opened. But whatever the book is, it is not opened until the last seal is broken—in Revelation chapter 8.

The difference between the seals and the trumpets, which are contained in the seventh seal, is striking. The first four seals, in effect, are things that man can cause to happen to man—nothing supernatural about any of it. The first sign of supernatural events happens with the sixth seal—or the Rapture itself. But if you compare the trumpets to the seals, the trumpets are so obviously the wrath of God, that there can be absolutely no mistake about that.

I think that Joel 2:31 and 32 clarifies this better than any other verses:

**Joel 2:31-32** – *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.*

Notice that the sun and moon will be affected BEFORE the great and terrible day of the Lord. When are the sun and moon so affected? In the sixth seal of Revelation 6! Therefore, everything that happened BEFORE IS NOT the Day of the Lord!



Also consider the fact that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered! That sounds to me like the raptured saints! Notice the conclusion of the sentence however: “for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant who the LORD shall call.” What remnant did the Lord call out of Zion and Jerusalem? Why the 144,000, of course. They were sealed by God in Revelation 7:1-8! What an almost perfect parallel!

Someone, no doubt, will note that Peter made mention of these verses in his great sermon in Acts 2:14-31. He is explaining to the people that they (he and his fellow disciples) weren't drunk, but that the Spirit of God had been poured out upon them. Although he quoted much of the prophecy, it was only the part of the Spirit of God being poured out upon men to which he was alluding because that is the only thing that happened at that moment of his sermon. No sun was darkened; no moon was turned to blood—only the Spirit of God (the Holy Ghost) had fallen upon the apostles.

In addition, after Jesus' death, they were in the last days. There is no indication that Joel 2:31 and 32 had been fulfilled in Acts 2—only that they had now entered into the days of that prophecy—NOT that the entire prophecy had been completed! Also it is significant that Peter did not quote ALL of Joel 2:32—only half of it. The rest of the verse reads, “...for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.” When does God call a remnant of Jews? In Revelation 7:1-8.

It is evident, I believe, that Revelation 8 begins the Day of the Lord and not Revelation 6. Therefore, we can, with confidence, say that the Rapture will happen BEFORE that great and terrible day, which means no raptured Christian will suffer through any part of it.

At the same time, it is pure ignorance to assume that Christians will never suffer. Of course there will be suffering. Of course Christians will go through tribulation. God warned us, Jesus told us, and we have thousands

and millions of examples of it, not only today, but throughout history! Christians will have only a small part of the Day of the Lord. That is, they will be raptured, and that starts the whole thing! They will have no part of God's execution of vengeance on the heathen and a world that has turned its back on God. That coming vengeance is an issue between God and this evil world. Until the Rapture happens, it would be foolhardy to say that Christians won't suffer. Today, as of this writing, thousands of Chinese Christians are suffering for their faith as well as many Christians in the Muslim nations.

# 9

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## THE TIMELINE OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

**A**n important key to understanding Revelation lies in understanding how God teaches it to us. By biblically defining the terms “the Great Tribulation” and “Day of the Lord,” where the Rapture will take place, we have a much clearer picture of Revelation and how the verses work in tangent with each other.

Having this foundation, allows the student of the Bible to make even more obvious connections that will help in a further study of Revelation.

Most people who study Revelation will note the many obvious parallel and duplicate events that are spoken of in Revelation. Most simply treat them as entirely separate events, which can lead to some interesting and confusing explanations. Clearly, misunderstanding how God revealed the Revelation to John could lead to serious consequences in our understanding of the book of Revelation as a whole.

Let me give you an example of what I am talking about. In Revelation 10:6 and 7, the Bible says that everything will be *finished* in the seventh trumpet. The problem is that the seventh trumpet ENDS in the latter part of chapter 11! Even when reading it, it appears to be an ending. Christ’s reign, rewards to the saints, judgment to the lost...it is all there! Yet eight

chapters follow thereafter before coming to the Millennial Reign of Christ in chapter 20! What about those other eight chapters? How do they fit in with all this, since everything was to be finished in the seventh trumpet?

That is only a small example. Many more events seem to be described, sometimes twice and sometimes three times, throughout Revelation chapters 7-19. To say that all these events are chronological with each other will lead to confusion. There must be some repeated events.

Let me give you some more examples:

1. Does God tread the winepress of His enemies once or twice (Revelation 14:14-20, 19:14-18)?
2. When does Babylon actually fall (Revelation 14:8 or 18:2)?
3. When does the beast get his power to destroy the saints (Revelation 11:7-12 or 13:7)?
4. When do the nations actually become the nations of our Lord, and when does He actually judge the dead (Revelation 11:15-18 or 20:1-15)?
5. Is there a total of 7 years mentioned in Revelation or a total of 14 years (Revelation 11:2, 3; 12:6; 12:14; 13:5)?

These are a few of the reasons why I believe that the events in Revelation are actually told more than once.

Through chapter 6 of Revelation, all events are in chronological order. In fact, I'd say that all events from chapter 4 through 11 are in chronological order. But there is a definite divide—or reviewing—after that. In fact, I believe that the events from chapter 7 through chapter 19 are told **THREE** times.

This is not a unique concept to the Bible. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John do the same thing. No one would say that the events in Mark follow the events in Matthew. They are parallel, duplicated in many cases. Some have more detail than others for certain events, and some mention events the others do not. But the events are parallel, repeated. A few of Daniel's visions do the same. Much of what happens between the Samuels and the Chronicles are repetitions. Deuteronomy actually means the second giving of the law—a repetition of Exodus and Leviticus. Reiteration is therefore not a unique concept and is consistent with Bible teachings.

Let me give the chapter breaks:

1. Vision One: Revelation 6 – 11
2. Vision Two: Revelation 12 – 14
3. Vision Three: Revelation 15 – 22

Let me say that I do not believe that the seals are parallels of the trumpets or of the vials. I have already established that the seals represent the Great Tribulation and the trumpets only appear *after* the last seal is broken and the book is opened.

The next few pages contain a verse-by-verse comparison chart of all the parallels, duplicates, and repetitions between the three visions. These verses are why I believe that there are three cycles to the same vision and why I separated them the way I did.

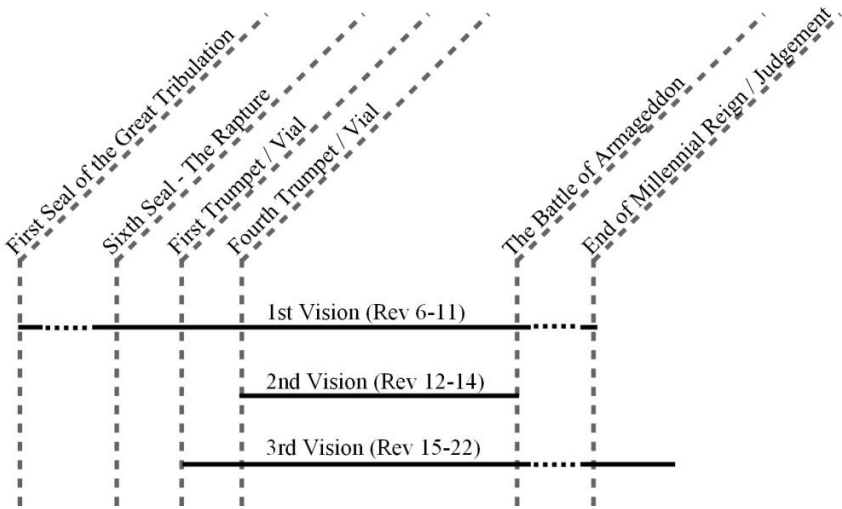
You will see that there are quite an astounding number of parallels. View it much as you do the Gospels. One gives more detail than another, and in some cases, one mentions an event the others do not. But the following chart shows most of the parallels. I believe you will find it interesting.

For me, this charting made the entire book of Revelation much easier to follow. In comparing the time frames, John's first vision gives quite a bit of description up to the battle of Armageddon, only referencing the final Millennial Reign of Christ and the final judgment. His second vision

## THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

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starts around the fourth trumpet and gives more detail about the battle of Armageddon, but stops there. Look at the following chart:



Here are some thoughts on my perceptions of the three different visions:

### VISION 1

You could say that John’s first vision really started in Revelation 4:1 when John saw a “door in heaven.” It is the general description of what occurs before the Day of the Lord (seven-year period) and during the Day of the Lord. It seems to concentrate more on the human suffering and destruction that occurs on the earth than anything else.

However, it only briefly references the Millennial reign of Christ and the final judgment. Recall Revelation 10:7:

**Revelation 10:7** – *But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.*

God made it very clear that the seventh trumpet was to be the *end* of His wrath—or the end of the Day of the Lord. This trumpet both sounds and ends in Revelation 11. Chapter 12 begins John’s second vision.

## **VISION 2**

John’s second vision begins with, “...there appeared a great wonder in heaven” (Revelation 12:1). The word “*wonder*” is the same Greek word as the word “*sign*” used to begin John’s third vision in Revelation 15:1. So perhaps God is disclosing another angle to what He has already revealed to John.

However, this second vision seems to deal more with a heavenly perspective than anything else. It shows the battle between Michael and Satan, the Lamb with the 144,000, and a heavenly perspective of the battle of Armageddon.

The battle of Armageddon is where it ends. It makes no reference to anything that will happen afterward. Chapter 15 launches right into John’s third vision.

## **VISION 3**

John’s third vision concentrates on the fall of Babylon and the battle of Armageddon. It begins in a similar manner as do the other two: “And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous....” This vision moves quickly through the vials to focus more on the ending of the Day of the Lord. It then details the Millennial Reign of Christ and the Great White Throne of Judgment that is to follow.

The following verse charts are of particular interest at showing how often John’s three visions overlap.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

REVELATION 7-11	REVELATION 12-14	REVELATION 15-19	COMMENTS
<p><b>7:9</b> After this I beheld, and, lo, a <u>great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;</u></p> <p><b>7:13-14</b> And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, <u>These are they which came out of great tribulation,</u> and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.</p>		<p><b>15:2</b> And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: <u>and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name,</u> stand on the <u>sea of glass,</u> having the harps of God.</p>	<p><i>I believe chapter 7 and chapter 15 describe the prelude to the seven-year period—or the Day of the Lord.</i></p> <p><i>In this case, notice that there is described a large body of Christians standing before God in or about the temple. The “sea of glass” is also mentioned in Revelation 4:6.</i></p> <p><i>There appears to be no prelude in chapter 12 unless it is 12:1-3. But there are no obvious parallels there to the other two visions</i></p>
<p><b>7:10-12</b> And cried with a loud voice, <u>saying, Salvation to our God</u> which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne</p>		<p><b>15:3-4</b> And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, <u>saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.</u> Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy</p>	<p><i>Both times they sing or worship God.</i></p>



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REVELATION 7-11	REVELATION 12-14	REVELATION 15-19	COMMENTS
<p>on their faces, and worshipped God, <u>Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.</u></p>		<p>name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.</p>	
<p><b>7:15</b> Therefore are they before the throne of God, <u>and serve him day and night in his temple:</u> and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.</p>		<p><b>15:5</b> And after that I looked, and, <u>behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:</u></p>	<p><i>In both cases, the temple is mentioned as the place where this occurred.</i></p>
<p><b>8:3-4</b> And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. <u>And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.</u></p>		<p><b>15:8</b> <u>And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power;</u> and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.</p>	<p><i>Interesting how smoke is mentioned here in both cases in the temple.</i></p> <p><i>It is also interesting that they occur both just prior to the first trumpet or the first vial.</i></p> <p><i>Note also that they were both given the trumpets and the vials. The parallels are many.</i></p>
<p><b>8:7</b> The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were</p>		<p><b>16:2</b> And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous</p>	<p><i>This connection seems like no connection at all and apparently argues against this</i></p>

THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

REVELATION 7-11	REVELATION 12-14	REVELATION 15-19	COMMENTS
cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.		sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.	<i>idea. However, it is not insurmountable. When the beast begins issuing marks is not apparent.</i>  <i>In Rev 13, the beast forces EVERYONE to take it. According to 2 Thess 2:3, the Antichrist (the Beast) must be revealed BEFORE the seven- year period. He could institute the mark, look to be a savior, and simply force it later.</i>
<b>8:8-9</b> <u>And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;</u> And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.		<b>16:3</b> <u>And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood</u> of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.	<i>This is better. But there still seems to be a problem in numbers. One mentions a third, and the other apparently the entire sea. Yet it doesn't exactly state ALL the sea—just the sea. Probably the part that was affected. If they are the same event described twice, then we know that the sea is a third of the sea.</i>
<b>8:10-11</b> <u>And the third angel sounded,</u>		<b>16:4-7</b> <u>And the third angel poured out his</u>	<i>Notice the pattern here. Both talk</i>

THE TIMELINE OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

REVELATION 7-11	REVELATION 12-14	REVELATION 15-19	COMMENTS
<p><u>and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters:</u> And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; <u>and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.</u></p>		<p><u>vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters;</u> and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, <u>and thou hast given them blood to drink;</u> for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.</p>	<p><i>about rivers. Both are consistent as to where the plague is located. Just as the previous one talks about the sea.</i></p> <p><i>Again the only real difference is the description of what happens to the rivers.</i></p> <p><i>In going through the rest of the trumpets and vials, you will see that they are very consistent as to what is affected. They vary in the effects, but except for the first trumpet and vial, they all agree as to what is affected.</i></p>
<p><b>8:12-13</b> <u>And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened,</u> and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven,</p>	<p><b>12:1-4</b> And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. <u>And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth:</u> and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to</p>	<p><b>16:8- 9</b> <u>And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun;</u> and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.</p>	<p><i>Rev 8:12 and Rev 12:4 both mention a third part of the stars.</i></p> <p><i>Rev 8:12 and Rev 16:8 both mention the sun together.</i></p> <p><i>It is possible that all three are describing the same event.</i></p> <p><i>Note that the “woe, woe, woe” is heard just before a star falls</i></p>

THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

REVELATION 7-11	REVELATION 12-14	REVELATION 15-19	COMMENTS
<p>saying with a loud voice, <u>Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth</u> by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!</p>	<p>devour her child as soon as it was born.</p> <p><b>12:12</b> Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. <u>Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.</u></p>		<p><i>to the earth in chapter 9:1. Notice in the second vision the last verse where it uses “woe” for the inhabitants of the earth because Satan is cast down to them. The fifth trumpet is where Satan is cast down!</i></p>
<p><b>9:1-2</b> And the fifth angel sounded, <u>and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth</u>; and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. <u>And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.</u></p> <p><b>9:6</b> And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.</p> <p><b>9:11</b> <u>And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit,</u></p>	<p><b>12:7-9</b> And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. <u>And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan,</u> which deceiveth the whole world: <u>he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.</u></p> <p><b>12:12</b> Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. <u>Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea!</u></p>	<p><b>16:10-11</b> And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; <u>and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,</u> And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.</p>	<p><i>There are many similarities in these passages.</i></p> <p><i>Satan and his angels are cast down after losing a war with Michael and his angels. This might be the star with the keys to the bottomless pit that let loose all the locusts. After all, the king over the locusts is Abaddon or Apollyon—I believe Satan himself. So the star could be Satan and the locusts his angels over whom he is king.</i></p> <p><i>The vial was poured on the seat of the beast—Antichrist</i></p>

THE TIMELINE OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

REVELATION 7-11	REVELATION 12-14	REVELATION 15-19	COMMENTS
<p><u>whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.</u></p>	<p><u>for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.</u></p>		<p><i>(Satan)—and there was darkness. When the smoke arose from the pit, the sun was darkened.</i></p> <p><i>They cried because of their pains, and they also sought death and found it not. The locusts had power to hurt man for five months.</i></p>
<p><b>9:13-15</b> And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, <u>Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.</u> And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.</p> <p><b>9:16</b> <u>And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.</u></p>		<p><b>16:12-14</b> And the sixth angel <u>poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates;</u> and the water thereof was dried up, <u>that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.</u> And I saw <u>three unclean spirits</u> like frogs come out of the <u>mouth</u> of the dragon, and out of the <u>mouth</u> of the beast, and out of the <u>mouth</u> of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.</p>	<p><i>Here we see a startling connection with the river Euphrates. It is interesting that the river is specifically mentioned in both the sixth trumpet and the sixth vial.</i></p> <p><i>In the trumpet, there is mentioned an army 200 million strong. In the vial, the way has been prepared for the kings of the east. China could put a 200-million-man army in the field and may be the only country that could do so. This would explain these verses quite simply.</i></p>

THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

REVELATION 7-11	REVELATION 12-14	REVELATION 15-19	COMMENTS
<p><b>9:18</b> <u>By these three</u> was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, <u>which issued out of their mouths.</u></p>			<p><i>Note also that both mention 3 unclean beasts— not 4 or 2 but 3.</i></p> <p><i>Notice also what issues out of their mouths...</i></p>
<p><b>11:3</b> And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall <u>prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore</u> days, clothed in sackcloth.</p> <p><b>11:7</b> And when they shall have finished their testimony, <u>the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.</u></p>	<p><b>13:5</b> And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; <u>and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.</u></p> <p><b>13:6-8</b> And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. <u>And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.</u> And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.</p>	<p><b>16:13-16</b> And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, <u>to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.</u> Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. <u>And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.</u></p>	<p><i>The witnesses are given power 3½ years. Then the beast kills them. Chapter 13 says that the beast will get power for 3½ years. That fits extremely well.</i></p> <p><i>The devils that gather the nations to Armageddon are the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet which are given power over all nations and kindreds and tongues...and everyone will worship the beast.</i></p> <p><i>It fits very well.</i></p>

THE TIMELINE OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

REVELATION 7-11	REVELATION 12-14	REVELATION 15-19	COMMENTS
<p><b>11:19</b> And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, <u>and an earthquake, and great hail.</u></p>	<p><b>14:8</b> And there followed another angel, saying, <u>Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city,</u> because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.</p>	<p><b>16:18-19</b> And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.</p> <p><b>16:21</b> <u>And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.</u></p>	<p><i>Notice the reference to Babylon. What Babylon is, is not the topic of this book. But that it is destroyed at this time is evident—or that it has recently fallen. If Babylon had fallen in chapter 14, why would God destroy her again in chapters 16-18?</i></p> <p><i>Perhaps it is the same event.</i></p> <p><i>Note also the connection of the hail in chapter 16 and in chapter 11.</i></p> <p><b>ALL OF CHAPTER 17 AND 18 IS A DESCRIPTION OF THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON!</b></p>
<p><b>11:15</b> And the seventh angel sounded; <u>and there were great voices in heaven,</u> saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall</p>		<p><b>19:1</b> And after these things I heard <u>a great voice of much people in heaven,</u> saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:</p>	<p><i>Note the parallel between the many voices. The chronology here is very interesting.</i></p>

THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

REVELATION 7-11	REVELATION 12-14	REVELATION 15-19	COMMENTS
reign for ever and ever.			
<b>11:16-17</b> And the <u>four and twenty elders</u> , which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.		<b>19:4</b> And the <u>four and twenty elders</u> and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.	<i>Again the parallel is noteworthy that the 24 elders worship God at the same time—if this parallel is accurate.</i>
<b>11:15</b> And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, <u>The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever....</u>  <b>11:18</b> And the nations were angry, <u>and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that</u>	<b>14:14-16</b> And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped....	<b>19:15-16</b> And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: <u>and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.</u> And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.  <b>19:19-21</b> And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the	<i>Chapter 11 contains a summary of the end—not a description, but a summary. Chapter 14 shares some of the details of the battle of Armageddon (I believe). Chapter 19 gives stark detail about that battle and of the end.  Notice that in chapter 14 and in chapter 19, the winepress of the wrath of God is mentioned. Does God do this twice? Or could they be</i>



THE TIMELINE OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

REVELATION 7-11	REVELATION 12-14	REVELATION 15-19	<i>COMMENTS</i>
fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.	<u>14:19-20</u> <u>And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.</u>	beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. <u>And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse,</u> which sword proceeded out of his mouth...	<i>descriptions of the same event?</i>  <i>When you get to chapter 20 and verse 3, the 1,000-year reign of Christ begins. This is the definite end of the Day of the Lord. From there, you have the final judgments, the New Jerusalem, and so on. But the seven years is at an end.</i>

The following is a combined timeline of events in approximate chronological order as John saw them in his three visions, beginning with the Rapture as described in the sixth seal:

1. ***The Rapture*** (Revelation 6:12-17).
2. 144,000 Jewish male virgins are sealed (Revelation 7:1-8).
3. The raptured body of believers in Heaven is seen for the first time (Revelation 7:9-14; 15:2).
4. They worship and sing praises to God (Revelation 7:12; 15:3-4).
5. An elder who talks to John about this group reveals they came out of Great Tribulation (Revelation 7:13-17).

6. The seventh seal is opened, and there is space or quiet in heaven for half an hour (Revelation 8:1).
7. The temple of God is opened (in Heaven), and seven angels come out (Revelation 8:2; 15:5-7).
8. The angels were given seven trumpets by one of the beasts (or seven vials) (Revelation 8:2; 15:7).
9. An angel offers on the altar the prayers of all the saints (Revelation 8:3).
10. Smoke fills the temple and comes before God (Revelation 8:4; 15:8).
11. An angel took the censer and cast the fire into the earth. There is lightning and earthquakes and voices (the two witnesses? See #14) (Revelation 8:5).
12. The angels prepare to blow the trumpets or pour out the vials (Revelation 8:6; 16:1).
13. **The First Trumpet or First Vial** – There is hail, fire, blood, grievous sores, trees and grass burned (Revelation 8:7; 16:2).
14. It is probable that it is here that power is given to the two witnesses (Revelation 11:3) in spite of their being mentioned in the sixth trumpet. The sixth trumpet is referring more to the power of Satan and his ability to destroy these two rather than the fact that these two appeared at the same time as Satan did. It is clear that Satan reigns for 3½ years AFTER killing these two.
15. The two witnesses will defeat all attempts to kill them for the first 3½ years (Revelation 11:3-6). What is interesting is that these two have power to cause plagues whenever they will. Could it be that the first four trumpets and vials are instigated upon their request since

they represent the plagues? And could it be that the trumpets represent one witness and the vials the other witness? Naturally, this conjecture is speculation.

16. **The Second Trumpet or Second Vial** – The sea became as blood (Revelation 8:8-9; 16:3).
17. **The Third Trumpet or the Third Vial** – Rivers became bitter with blood (Revelation 8:10-11; 16:4-7).
18. **The Fourth Trumpet or the Fourth Vial** – (Revelation 8:12; 16:8).
19. The third part of the sun was smitten as well as the stars (Revelation 8:12).
20. Great heat scorched men of the earth (Revelation 16:8-9).
21. An angel declares three more woes or the last three trumpets and vials (Revelation 8:13).
22. **The Fifth Trumpet or Vial** – (Revelation 9:1-12; 16:10-11).
23. There is a war in heaven between Michael and Satan (Revelation 12:7).
24. Satan is cast down to the earth with the appearance of a star (Revelation 12:9-12; 9:1) along with his angels.
25. Satan opens the bottomless pit and smoke arises covering the earth in darkness (Revelation 9:2; 16:10).
26. Locusts come forth and torment men for five months (Revelation 9:3-12). Quite possibly these could be Satan's angels because he is king over them.
27. Satan attacks Israel (perhaps by inciting the world against them...sound familiar? Or directly with his host of angels). The Jews are forced to flee. God then

- protects the Jews for the last 3½ years, and Jerusalem is given completely back to the Gentiles until Jesus comes back to reclaim it (Revelation 12:6, 14; 11:1-2).
28. Satan persecutes those who were saved after the Rapture which could include the 144,000 AND the two witnesses (Revelation 12:13-17).
  29. **The Sixth Trumpet or Sixth Vial** – (Revelation 9:13-11:14; 16:12-16). *This is probably the MID-POINT of the seven years of the Day of the Lord.* And this trumpet or vial very possibly represents the majority of the last 3½ years.
  30. The Beast kills the two witnesses (Revelation 11:3-7).
  31. There will be rejoicing over the death of the two witnesses (Revelation 11:8-10).
  32. After three days, God raised them from the dead and takes the two witnesses to Heaven (Revelation 11:11-12).
  33. A great earthquake occurs and 7,000 men are killed (Revelation 11:13).
  34. The River Euphrates is dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the east with an army of 200 million to solidify Satan's rule (Revelation 9:15-16; 16:12).
  35. Three evil spirits plague the earth: the Dragon, the Beast and the False Prophet (Revelation 9:17-21; 16:13-14).
  36. The three kill a third part of the world's population, probably in an effort to bring them under domination so Satan can effectively rule the world (Revelation 9:18).
  37. The Beast becomes the king of the earth (Revelation 13:7-10).

38. The seven thunders occur next. The Bible does not reveal what they are though (Revelation 10:1-4).
39. The Beast comes into power, granted by Satan, the Dragon (Revelation 13:1-2).
40. The Beast is killed or wounded unto death and then healed or raised from the dead, and the entire world wondered after the Beast (Revelation 13:2-6).
41. A second beast appears who also has power. He turns everyone to worshipping the Beast. This would be the False Prophet (Revelation 13:11-14).
42. The False Prophet gives power to an image of the Beast to live. This is one of the greatest deceptions, and most will fall for it (Revelation 13:15).
43. The Beast now forces everyone to take the mark of the beast—666. In order to buy food, gas, power, or do anything, the people must have it. Those who do not have the mark of the best will be hunted down and killed (Revelation 13:15-18).
44. The three (the unholy trinity) begins to gather the nations together for war with God in a place called Armageddon (Revelation 16:16).
45. **The Seventh Trumpet or the Seventh Vial** – (Revelation 11:15-19; 16:17-19:21).
46. The 144,000 preach the Gospel to the entire world for the last time (Revelation 14:1-7).
47. A great earthquake heralds the final hour; entire cities collapse (Revelation 16:17-18).
48. A great and terrible hail plagues the earth (Revelation 11:19; 16:21).

49. Babylon comes into remembrance before God (Revelation 16:19).
50. A description is given of the evils of Babylon—an intermission of sorts (Revelation 17:1-18:24).
51. The fall of Babylon (Revelation 14:8; 18:1-24).
52. Many voices praise God and Jesus (Revelation 11:15; 19:1-8).
53. The 24 elders and 4 beasts worship God (Revelation 11:16; 19:4).
54. The marriage of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-8).
55. The marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9-10).
56. The armies of God gather in Heaven (Revelation 19:11-13).
57. The harvest of the world or the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 14:14-16; 19:15-21).
58. The winepress of the wrath of God (Revelation 14:17-20; 19:15).
59. The birds of the earth feed on the death and destruction of the wicked (Revelation 19:17-18).
60. The Beast and the False Prophet are all thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:19-20).
61. An angel from Heaven binds the dragon and casts him into the bottomless pit for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-3).
62. Christ's 1,000-year reign begins (Revelation 20:4)!

# 10

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## THE UNHOLY TRINITY

**F**or this chapter, I will not deliberate in great detail. Mostly, I want to give an overview to help aid you in your study. The purpose of this book is to give you a basis to study the book of Revelation for yourself. It is a starting point—an approach that will enable you to read Revelation line upon line and compare Scripture to Scripture. This book is merely intended as an approach that reconciles the flaws in the traditional Premillennial doctrine. Ultimately, I want you to understand what you are reading. I want you to be able to follow the Scriptures as you read. This is the purpose of this writing.

Ample passages of Scripture prove that there is something called the *Trinity* (a word that means “three in one,” but not a word that can be found in Scripture). The Trinity consists of God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost (John 1:1-3; 1 John 5:7).

I believe, however, that there is also an unholy trinity as well. You see, when Satan is cast down to the earth, he will set up an Antichrist (one who appears to be Christ, but is not). He will empower that Antichrist to deceive the nations and to use that deception to set himself up as God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The members of the unholy trinity are Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet.

## **The Dragon**

The Dragon is Satan (Revelation 12:9). Keep in mind that Satan has never been to Hell. He does not want to go there because he knows that it is a place of punishment for him and his angels (Matthew 25:41). Job 1:6 reveals that Satan still has access to Heaven itself. He also has access to the earth, 1 Peter 5:8 tells us.

However, in Revelation 12 we have a war in Heaven and Satan is kicked out permanently (Revelation 12:9-13). Satan then gives his power and authority to the Beast (the Antichrist, discussed a bit later) in Revelation 13:1-2. The purpose of Satan's doing so is for the deception of the nations of the earth during this time. He gets away with it too. At the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16; 20:1-3), he is defeated and bound in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years. Exactly what the bottomless pit is, I am not sure. It is not the lake of fire for Satan won't be cast there until after the 1,000-year reign of Christ is finished.

After the 1,000 years are up, Satan is loosed for a short season (Revelation 20:7). He then gathers together another army to face God and His saints. He even gets so far as to surround Jerusalem where Jesus has set up the capitol of His kingdom (Revelation 20:8-9). Satan is defeated and finally cast into the lake of fire forever (Revelation 20:10).

## **The Beast**

The Beast is the Antichrist, a man who will be infused with the power of Satan. Remember that Christians believe that Christ was the God-man, God in man form. The Antichrist will not be Satan in man form; rather, he will be a man empowered by Satan (Revelation 13:1-2).

Jesus predicted that there will be false christs who appear (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22). John calls them antichrists (1 John 2:18). 1 John 2:18 states that a *particular* Antichrist will come; the Beast would be that particular Antichrist.



In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12, an interesting discussion takes place about this man. In this Scripture, he is called the son of perdition (2 Thessalonians 2:3) and that his revelation to the world must precede the coming of Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:3). It does not say that he has to be revealed as the Antichrist, but that he, as the man who would one day be infused with Satan's power, would be revealed to the world—probably as an important political figure, the head of a powerful nation, or possibly even the head of the United Nations.

He will set himself up as God (2 Thessalonians 2:4) when he comes into full power. Remember that Christ claimed that He was God as well. So too will the Antichrist. I don't believe that the Antichrist will come into full power until the midway point of the seven years of the Day of the Lord (Revelation 13:5). Compare this Scripture to Revelation 13:3-9 where the Beast conquers all of the nations and all of the Christians who had gotten saved after the Rapture. People began to WORSHIP him.

Still, the Antichrist *will be* in power before he is possessed. He most likely was already in power before the Day of the Lord began. After the chaotic events of that time, he could easily be in a position to pull together the fractured nations of the planet and set himself up as something more than a ruler. He would be in a perfect position to be possessed by the Satan when the Devil is cast down to the earth.

I do not believe that the first half of the seven years of the Day of the Lord will be peaceful. In fact, I believe that it will be bloody, destructive, chaotic, and filled with terror. Through this time of great volatility, the Antichrist will rise up and bring some sort of stability. People will proclaim him to be a deliverer—a savior if you will—and then they will believe that he is the Christ. They will watch him perform miracles (Revelation 13:3-4). In fact, one of the biggest things that he does is to kill the two witnesses who had been adding to the chaos and the destruction (Revelation 11:3-12).

The Bible does not reveal the identity of the two witnesses. Some Biblicists believe that they are Moses and Elijah, others Elijah and Enoch. Frankly, the Bible doesn't say and gives no clue. An additional description of them is foretold in Zechariah 4:1-14, which says that they are the anointed ones that stand beside the Lord of the whole earth. But names are not given! However, at the beginning of the Day of the Lord, they appear, having received power from God (these may be the *voices* mentioned in Revelation 8:5 that was cast onto the earth). They go around preaching against the world. They are not kind. People do not like what they have to say, but no one can stop these two. They add so much to the utter chaos that is going on at the time that, when the Antichrist finally overcomes them, everyone rejoices (Revelation 11:10).

All of the insecurity the world feels helps the Antichrist come to power. At about that time, the False Prophet comes onto the scene and helps to force the world to worship the Antichrist. Having consolidated his power on the earth, the Antichrist now prepares for war against God. He gathers his armies to Armageddon (Revelation 16:16), and there he fights a losing battle with God. He is thrown into the lake of fire, and that is the last of him (Revelation 19:19-21).

Going back to 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12, there are some striking similarities to verses in Revelation. Notice 2 Thessalonians 2:8 where it tells us that God will consume (defeat) the Antichrist with the spirit of His mouth and the brightness of His coming. Compare that verse to Revelation 19:11-16 which speaks about Jesus' eyes being a flame of fire and from His mouth a sharp sword comes!

2 Thessalonians 2:9 addresses the Antichrist's ability to perform miraculous and powerful deceptions. Revelation 13:4 says that he has the power of Satan, and Revelation 13:9 states that the nations are deceived by the miracles and wonders of the False Prophet! 2 Thessalonians 2:11 and 12 reveal that God will destroy all those who follow after the Antichrist. Compare that to Revelation 14:9-10!

## **The Second Beast**

The False Prophet comes on the scene as the second beast (Revelation 13:11-12). His sole purpose is to deceive the nations into worshipping the Antichrist as the Messiah or as the Christ. He performs miracles and wonders to prove this (Revelation 13:13-14). He even brings an image to life which has the power to harm people who don't worship the Antichrist (Revelation 13:15), and of course, it is he who forces upon everyone the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16-18).

He is known as the False Prophet due to Revelation 16:13, which is a parallel passage to Revelation 13. The False Prophet, along with the Antichrist, will be thrown into the lake of fire after the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:20).

This is a description of the unholy trinity and their fate.

# 11

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## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

**T**here are a plethora of topics to still discuss about Revelation. Many of them are utterly fascinating, like the 144,000 Jews who were sealed, the 1,000-year reign of Christ, the Great White Throne of Judgment, the New Jerusalem, the new Heaven and the new earth, the marriage supper of the Lamb, and the Book of Life.

Yes, I have opinions on all these subjects. But my primary purpose for this book is accomplished. I believe you will now have the tools for a wonderful experience in your own personal study of Revelation. The subjects discussed herein, I think, are paramount for one's understanding of Revelation and to one's ability to concisely and easily follow it from start to finish.

You will, more than likely, find things that are still confusing to you. For me, however, it was the Scriptural understanding of what the "Great Tribulation" and "the Day of the Lord" were that allowed me to finally make sense of what was confusing. Try it yourself. Study it well, and I think that you'll see that everything fits and fits well.

God bless you in your study of Revelation—as He has promised!

## APPENDIX A

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# WHAT DID JESUS MEAN BY “ALL THESE THINGS SHALL COME TO PASS IN THIS GENERATION”?

Perhaps one of the most common objections that is brought to my attention is Matthew 24:32-35, specifically one particular phrase that seems to indicate that the disciples would be witness to what is considered the Rapture.

First, let me reiterate my rules for studying Scripture:

- 1. All Scripture must agree. If it does not, a contradiction would discredit everything.*
- 2. Try to do away with assumptions. A thesis that is built on assumptions is inherently flawed at its foundation and must alter the simple meaning of other verses in order to fit the prevailing concept. I do not think that taking the simple meaning of a verse and making it into something more complex is rightly dividing the Word of truth; rather, it is an erroneous way to study the Bible.*
- 3. The Bible will explain itself. At times, some passages seem to make little sense. In such cases, another passage of Scripture will explain it satisfactorily. Relying on this*

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*method will do away with personal interpretations of Scripture.*

With these guidelines in mind, I will address this controversy. The verses below are shown in parallel so that you may see all three passages side by side.

<p><b>Matthew 24:32-35</b> – <i>Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, <u>This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.</u> Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.</i></p>	<p><b>Mark 13:28-31</b> – <i>Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that <u>this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.</u> Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.</i></p>	<p><b>Luke 21:29-33</b> – <i>And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, <u>This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.</u> Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.</i></p>
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These verses would lead the reader into some doubt that Matthew 24:29-31 is indeed dealing with the Rapture. *For if ALL these things would come to pass in the disciples' generation, it would have nothing to do*

*with the Rapture!* Or Christianity has missed it! Or the whole thing is simply symbolic—a thought that has tremendous ramifications for everything else in the Bible. Truth be told, I have heard some of the most bizarre explanations to this verse from Premillennialists.

Let me share a few of them:

**First**, the Rapture has happened already. If that is the case and God had gathered all His elect in the Rapture, then why is history silent on the issue, or as some would like to explain, is it all just symbolic? How convenient! Why is it that whenever the Scriptures say something that doesn't fit in with someone's line of thinking, he explains it away as symbolism? Anyone, then, can attach whatever significance he wishes to any portion of Scripture and in any manner with just a bit of creativity. No wonder there are such varied opinions on the subject of Revelation.

**Secondly**, I have heard it explained that the passages are in reference to John the apostle who saw the vision of Revelation—so that it *did* indeed happen in the disciples' generation. John saw it. That explanation is a bit farfetched and certainly not consistent with the other times Jesus used the word "*generation*."

**Thirdly**, others have said that the word "*generation*" refers to the church age...or the Gospel itself (since the next verse says, "My words shall not pass away"). All of that is interesting and makes for a good debate, but it ignores the plain teaching. Why doesn't it mean what it says? Let's look at the key verses again:

<p><b>Matthew 24:34</b> – <i>Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.</i></p>	<p><b>Mark 13:30</b> – <i>Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.</i></p>	<p><b>Luke 21:32</b> – <i>Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.</i></p>
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Very clearly, to me anyway, Jesus said that the present generation (the Bible defines the word “*generation*” in Genesis 15:13-16 as 100 years) would still be ALIVE when ALL these things come to pass. That’s what it says.

It seems as if I have just contradicted myself. If ALL these things will come to pass, then Matthew 24:29-31 could NOT be talking about the Rapture! No, it *does* talk about the Rapture. The key is to understand what “THESE THINGS” actually are. Does it include ALL the verses from 4-31 or not? The answer is in the parable of the fig tree. Let’s look at that again:

<p><b>Matthew 24:32-32</b> –  <i>Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.</i></p>	<p><b>Mark 13:28-29</b> –  <i>Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.</i></p>	<p><b>Luke 21:29-31</b> –  <i>And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.</i></p>
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We’ll use the verses from Mark because there is a verse in the passage that IS NOT in either Matthew or in Luke. The verse is this:

**Mark 13:23** – *But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.*



The placement of this verse is BEFORE the description of the Rapture in Mark 13:24-27. This placement is important to remember.

Now back to Mark 13:28 and 29 and the parable of the fig tree. Jesus said that when the branch puts forth leaves, you know that summer is coming close. “*In the LIKE MANNER when they see THESE THINGS come to pass, they know that the kingdom of God is nigh.*” What are “these things” mentioned in verse 29? *They are the signs that take place before the Rapture.*

Take a look again at Mark 13:23 and notice that Jesus said, “I have foretold you *all things!*” A significant break occurs between verses 23 and 24 of Mark and between verses 28 and 29 of Matthew.

The generation of the disciples will witness all of the things between Matthew 24:4 and Matthew 24:28. ALL of the signs came to pass in their day! Titus destroyed the temple, he set up the abomination of desolations, and he scattered the Jews into all nations. Many were enslaved, and from that day to this, Jerusalem is trodden down of the Gentiles. False christs have popped onto the scene even—in their day. They *did* enter great tribulation. There has been no nation in history that has suffered as much for as long a period and as consistently as the Jews have (or for that matter, Christians either).

It all fits! I believe that within 40 to 60 years after Jesus died on the Cross, circumstances were right for Jesus to come back in the Rapture and begin the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord. He has been nigh, or close at hand, for nearly 2,000 years.

For this very reason, Jesus told His disciples in Mark 13:33-35 to *watch!* Jesus could come at *any time!* I don’t necessarily think that Jesus meant near in *time*, but near in *distance*—as of someone’s standing on the other side of a door. That is why He gave the command to watch—for we know not when He will come.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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**G**reg S. Baker was born in 1975 to a Christian couple. Reared in church all his life, he came to accept Jesus as his Saviour and attended Hyles-Anderson College, graduating with a bachelor's degree in Pastoral Theology. He was the pastor of an independent Baptist church in northern Colorado for 13 years.



His writing passion pervades nearly every aspect of his life. As a child, he was an avid reader and fell in love with words and their ability to stir the imagination and to convey ideas. While in high school, he attempted and completed his first novel only to see it rejected. Despite this setback, he turned his writing skills toward more productive means. It became a tool by which he conveyed his passion for his God and Saviour to the world around him. As a pastor, he used his love for writing to bring to others his nearly 20 years of experience in the ministry, counseling marriages, and healing relationships.

He now resides in Arizona and is continuing his writing ministry alongside his church ministries. He is married to the love of his life, Liberty, and has four incredible boys who alternately remind him of the excitement of youth and the inevitability of the passage of time. He loves playing sports and chess and tinkering around with computers. He has turned his writing talents into a full-time ministry in the hope that he can honor Jesus Christ far beyond his earthly life.

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