

End Times: Lesson 8 – The Tribulation

Okay – so on our timeline – we are in the church age – and at some point in the likely near future, a Pre-Tribulationist such as my self would say that the rapture will occur – and of course we went into great detail about this but we’ll touch on the three views as we go through the Tribulation period – so the Holy Spirit, the restrainer is removed from the earth – and along with Him, the church since He resides within us – the earth is in turmoil – the media are coming up with all of these theories and selling them as to what happened to millions of people - and while that’s going on we’re now going to shift our focus to Heaven.

Revelation four brings us into the throne room of God and we see there are four Seraphim, these heavenly beings with six wings and each one is different, - one is like a lion, one like an ox, one has the face of a man and the fourth is like an eagle in flight – full disclosure – Bible scholars are very divided on this, some say they are allegorical descriptions, others say it’s just what they looked like to John – it doesn’t matter – they are there and they are worshipping God – “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty – who was, and is, and is to come.” There are also 24 elders there – some say it could be the 12 apostles and then 12 OT saints, others say it could be 24 people who have either died and gone before like Billy Graham, Charles Spurgeon, John Wesley, Martin Luther, John Calvin etc – or it could be 24 people who have been raptured – we don’t know – again – not relevant other than they are there and they are casting their crowns, their heavenly rewards, before the throne of God.

And then we get to Revelation 5. And this is the prelude to the Tribulation – God the Father is on the throne – and in His right hand (which stands for power and the ability to administer justice) He has a scroll, written on both sides –it’s sealed with 7 seals – the number of perfection or completion. The seals themselves were common for legal documents – In Roman law, and there’s some evidence for this, a

testament was sealed with seven seals by seven witnesses before its legality could be established – of course this isn't Rome – this is Heaven but it shows that the full authority of the one true king rests on this sealed document. A mighty angel- possibly Michael or Gabriel – but he proclaims in a loud voice - this is Rev 5:2-5 **“Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?”** ³ **And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it,** ⁴ **and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.** ⁵ **And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”**

And that is who? Jesus. And then in verse 11 – we see that surrounding them are a countless number of angels worshipping God.

And then it begins – Let's look at Revelation chapter 6.

Jesus opens the first seal and one of the Seraphim whose voice is described like thunder says COME! In Greek it means come or arrive – and we have a rider on a white horse with a bow and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering and to conquer –

And this is who? It's the antichrist. Now here's the thing – when it comes to the timing – many who hold the pre-tribulation view put the seals in the first half of the tribulation and some even put the trumpets in the first half of the tribulation. I certainly believe that at the very least the first four seals could be during the first half – but as I've looked at this very closely it's also very possible that only the first seal falls within the first half of the tribulation – I'm not 100% sure – because as we know the world is in chaos after the rapture, and this world leader will now emerge to set everything right. And he will negotiate a peace treaty with Israel and allow them to have their temple and begin sacrificing again. So really, other than the fact millions of Christians are missing – the world seems pretty decent and let's face it – the way the world is right now – those who are against the Christian way of life are not going

to shed a whole lot of tears for those of us standing between them and what they want which is to live in the world. Where they can kill their babies and have sex with whoever they want to whenever they want to.

But the fact the anti-Christ comes on the scene – remember – he’s deceiving – he’s handsome – charismatic – your Matthew McConaughey type guy – he’s wooing the world into a false sense of security.

This also lines up somewhat with the signs Jesus predicted – in Mt 24:4-5 Jesus says **“See that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying “I am the Christ”, and they will lead many astray.”** – again that’s talking about the false Christ’s and false prophets – well this is the ultimate false Christ.

And then Rev 6:3-4 **“³ When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” ⁴ And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.”**

This lines up with Matthew 24:6-7a **“⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...”**

We are currently in a very unstable environment in the world and there are right now rumors of wars and wars – again – remove all the true Christians, the Holy Spirit, the restrainer is gone, and so is the moral compass – nothing says that there won’t be a bunch of fighting going on until antichrist brings them under control – but I think it’s more probable that this won’t happen until the mid-point when antichrist breaks the peace treaty and begins his conquest – remember – three horns will fall to him.

Rev 6:5-6 **“⁵ When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And**

its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶ And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!” The third seal is famine which would be a result of war – especially if nuclear weapons are involved.

At the end of Matthew 24:7 – we have the wars and rumors of wars and Jesus says there will be famines.

Rev 6:7-8 ⁷ When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” ⁸ And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.”

We have death, famine and pestilence and either by wild animal attacks or the pestilence is caused by animals like west Nile, ebola, bird flu – monkey virus’ – some thought corona actually came from eating bats – you get the idea –

Luke adds pestilence to what Jesus said in His account – but I think if we look at it – at minimum – the second, third and fourth seals all kind of happen together and would contribute to each other – war, famine, death, pestilence – they are all related. And that’s why I tend to lean towards these happening at the mid tribulation point – I’m not saying it can’t and won’t happen in the first half – I just think it’s more logical because the fifth seal also ties in with the fourth and that will take a little time to come to fruition post rapture.

We now have the four horsemen of the apocalypse that have been loosed on the earth.

And we now get to seal number five – Rev 6:9-11 **“⁹ When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.**

¹⁰ They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” ¹¹ Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.”

The antichrist is going to martyr Christians – this lines up with Matthew 24:9-10 **“⁹ “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake.**

¹⁰ And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.”

Well – if either the pre-trib rapture or the mid-trib rapture is true – then the martyrs cannot be Christians unless what? There are Christians to martyr, right? And we’ll see how that comes about in Rev 7. But what’s going to happen is – at the mid-point of the tribulation – we see this in Rev 13 – starting with verse 5 **“⁵ And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. ⁶ It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, ⁸ and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear: ¹⁰ If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.”**

He was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. That's an important verse – that means that God has NOT allowed him to just do what he wants for those first three and a half years. Because what do you think is actually going on during the first three and a half years?

Revelation 7 – 144,000 Jewish men, all virgins, 12,000 from each tribe, are sealed and commissioned by God to reveal the truth – that Jesus was the messiah – that the people who disappeared were Christians and all of this was predicted in the NT. And they will be effective – they will bring many Jews and formerly non-believing or people who claimed the title of Christian like JW's and LDS, Progressives etc – and possibly some atheists' and agnostics as well. At the midpoint of the tribulation – the antichrist will desecrate the temple, declare himself God and he will not have God's permission to do what he's going to do. The False Prophet and he will institute a one world religion devoted to worshipping the antichrist – those who do not will be killed – the false prophet will institute the mark of the beast which will help identify and weed out believers because they won't be able to buy or sell and those who are weak will cave in and take the mark forsaking God for the rest of eternity.

The anti-christ will be indwelt by Satan – and will have the power to perform miracles, signs and wonders and he will be able to give that ability to the false prophet as well. Not only will he be killing Christians but he will take over the world by force.

Also – besides the 144,000 Jewish witnesses that have been bringing people to Christ and there are also two special witnesses that we see in Rev 11. **“11 Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, ² but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months. ³ And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for**

1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” 1260 days is 3.45 years so just under 3 ½ years. And there are two theories here – the first is that they begin their ministry at the mid-point and end it just prior to the return of Christ. The second is that they begin somewhere in the first half of the tribulation and it spans into the second half and I’ll show you why that’s very possible.

So who are these witnesses? Well – Rev 11:4-6 says “**4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. 5 And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. 6 They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire.**”

These are the two olive trees – last week I talked about the holy olive tree which represents God’s chosen people – and his original covenant which for us is the Old Testament. Well, the Old Testament is made up primarily of two parts – at least as Jesus summed it up and that is the law and the prophets. And the two OT figures who represent that is Moses (law) and Elijah (prophets). Also pointing to them are the abilities given to them Verses 5 and 6 are things that Elijah did – and in verse 6 is what Moses could do. Another thing that points to them is they were the two who visited Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. And so they are preaching Jesus and repentance at the temple in Jerusalem. Eventually we see the antichrist kills them. “**7 And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, 8 and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. 9 For three and a half days** some from the peoples and tribes and languages and

nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, ¹⁰ and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth.”

People are so happy they are dead – that they have a huge party and celebrate – exchanging presents just like on Christmas – and to defile their bodies which was the practice for criminals – they were usually just tossed on a garbage dump for the wild animals to eat – they let the bodies just lay in the streets of Jerusalem. And then we see in verse 11 **“But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. ¹² Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here!” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them.”** So similar to Christ – after 3 days they are resurrected – God’s audible voice calls them up and they ascend like Jesus did back into heaven as the enemies watch and then verses 13- **“¹³ And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.”** Now – it’s possible that this occurs between the fifth and sixth seal with the earthquake being at the sixth seal because in a moment we’re going to see a great earthquake – the other possibility is that it occurs between the sixth and seventh trumpet – because the next verse implies that. But either way – you have this for background going forward.

Now we get to the sixth seal – Revelation 6:12-17 **“¹² When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, ¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. ¹⁴ The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain**

and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶ calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?””

This is going to be absolutely terrifying! And Jesus talked about this in Matthew 24:15-22 “¹⁵“So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, ¹⁸ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. ¹⁹ And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! ²⁰ Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. ²² And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”

Do you see why I believe this is after the mid-point of the tribulation period?

Rev 6:15 -17 and Mt 24:16-22 are almost identical. Then the seventh seal is found in Revelation 8:1-5. “**When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.** ² Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. ³ And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, ⁴ and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. ⁵ Then the angel took

the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.”

This is an important event – this seventh seal first of all causes there to be silence in Heaven for – it says ½ hour – if this time stated is in the same general theme as the rest of time – i.e. one week = seven years then this would be about a week (or 7 days). A short period of time between the sets of judgments – meanwhile the faithful are praying to God and then as the trumpets begin there is thunder, lightning and an earthquake.

Rev 8:6 “6 Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them.” And then the first Trumpet judgment is in verse 7 **“7 The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.”**

This could be literal hail and fire – it could also be a nuclear attack. Either way – we’ve seen what the wildfires out west can do – those are nothing compared to this.

Trumpet number two – Rev 8:8-9 **“The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. 9 A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”** Now this could be a volcano, meteor or again possibly a nuclear attack with the great mountain representing the mushroom cloud. Whatever it is, a large Tsunami is most likely created destroying the ships.

Trumpet number three – Rev 8:10-11 **“10 The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. 11 The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter.”** This is likely a meteor - although some speculate once again – a nuclear ICBM. I would also point out that it could possibly be a demon – a fallen angel – Lucifer has been referred to as a star. Also in Rev 12:4 we see the war in heaven and it says that the dragon’s (Lucifer) tail swept down 1/3 of the stars in heaven – not literal stars as in giant burning nuclear furnaces in space – but angels. And I guess I should say at this point that it’s important to note that angel is really a title – it’s a job description – it means messenger – there are different types of heavenly beings – we have cherubim (which is what lucifer was), we have seraphim (which are what we see in the throne room of God) and then we have angels like Michael and Gabriel and those who visit Lot, they look like men but have an other-worldly appearance to them to the point where typically when people see them they are terrified. We’ll also see a similar reference in the fifth trumpet. That being said – Grant Osborne says it’s definitely not an angel – I can’t say for sure that he’s right because from a plain reading of this – I would simply ask – why not?

The fourth trumpet – **“¹² The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.”** Now the first three trumpets would all cause this to happen. Smoke from the fires, (we’ve seen this from the California wild fires where locally (out west) you can barely see the sun - dust and debris cast into the air from a meteor strike (this is what they believe happened

when the dinosaurs went extinct) and of course a nuclear winter would also cause this. And certainly God could just make it so.

Some have tried to match these judgments up to the plagues of Egypt and there are certainly some similarities – but they don't match up completely. What's important here is that God is trying to get humanities attention – He is God – not the antichrist – and enough is enough. God's judgment on the earth is building – the 144,000 witnesses are witnessing – God is giving humanity one last chance to repent.

And verse 13 says **“¹³ Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!”**

As if the last four trumpets weren't bad enough – it's going to get worse. The fifth trumpet Rev 9:1-11 – notice how long the description of this trumpet is – the others are one or two verses – this one is 11 – **“And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. ² He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. ³ Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. ⁴ They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵ They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. ⁶ And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them. ⁷ In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like**

human faces,⁸ their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth;⁹ they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle.¹⁰ They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails.¹¹ They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon."

Now there is controversy as to who this star fallen from heaven is – it could be a demon, but verse 11 says what? They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit whose name is the destroyer – so it could be Satan himself. Or it could be another entity all together, we are seeing a lot of counterfeiting going on here – we have the unholy trinity, and a hierarchy of angels – with archangels like Michael and Gabriel – this could be an arch-demon. Others have suggested that because the word fallen is very similar to descending that it's an actual angel of judgment, possibly Uriel, one commentator suggested Jesus himself since he holds the keys to death and hades but I would disagree with that – verse 1 says he was given the key not that he had it which implies he didn't have it to begin with. Grant Osborne in his commentary on Revelation argues for this not being a demon or a fallen angel but an actual angel (i.e. Uriel) and he makes a pretty good case – he says “This would be the only place in Revelation where God used an evil angel to execute his will, and there is too little evidence that this is the exception. S. Thompson asks how a fallen angel could be entrusted with the key to his own prison.” Well – yah – that makes a whole lot of sense. Anyway Osborne points to 1 Enoch 20:2 which is pseudepigrapha – that means it's a book written in the name of someone by someone else – Enoch didn't write this – we consider it extra biblical but I can tell you that some of the apostles (Peter & James) believed it to be scripture and actually quoted from it, so at the very least we should give it an apocrypha status. (Read 1 Enoch 20:2 from book) So this actually names this angel as being in charge of hell. The keeper of the gates of hell.

G.K. Beale argues just the opposite – in his commentary he goes through all the points I just made and then says – “Some commentators wrongly attempt to argue that the falling star image does not necessarily represent an evil figure because good angels “descend” (καταβαίνω) to visit the earth in the Apocalypse (10:1; 18:1; 20:1). That is different metaphorical language from that of a falling star, which is uniquely reserved for evil angels in the OT, Jewish writings, and the NT. Commentators have not adduced one example where a falling star metaphor is applied to a good angel. “Descending” could be used of the judgment of evil heavenly beings (1 En. 86:3), but this does not mean that the falling star metaphor must be seen as interchangeably applicable to good angels. The picture of the falling star corresponds to the language of being “cast down,” which also refers only to the judgment of evil angels in Revelation and elsewhere (e.g., 1 En. 86:3; 88:3; Rev. 12:4, 9–10, 13).

In addition to the resemblances with falling star depictions elsewhere (mentioned above), the conclusion that this is not a good angel but a fallen angel is also suggested by v 11. There the “angel of the abyss” is called “king over” the demonic locusts and is called “Abaddon” (“Destruction”) and “Apollyon” (“Destroyer”). The heavenly being who is sovereign over the abyss and the locusts in vv 1–3 is probably the one called their “king” in v 11 (for the satanic nature of this angel see on v 11). Therefore, the angel in v 1 is either Satan or one of his minions (the latter would be parallel with 2 En. 42:1, which portrays “those who hold the keys ... of the gates of hell” as “like great serpents, and their faces like extinguished lamps, and their eyes of fire, their sharp teeth”).

They both make good points – This is a case of – we don’t have to get buried in the details and determine which is correct – all we have to know that a heavenly being is going to release a horrific judgment on the earth.

“¹² The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.”

The Sixth trumpet (Rev 9:13- 20) **“¹³ Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, ¹⁴ saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” ¹⁵ So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind. ¹⁶ The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number. ¹⁷ And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions’ heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths. ¹⁸ By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. ¹⁹ For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound. ²⁰ The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, ²¹ nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.”**

Again – without getting too bogged down – these four angels could be demons or good angels enacting God’s judgment – Osborne points to Enoch again and talks about the “angels of punishment” in 1 Enoch 56:5-57-3. So he would lean towards good angels enacting God’s judgment where Beale would say their not – The way the text reads it implies that God is commanding them so I would tend to go with good angels – but what’s happening here is these angels are causing a human army to kill 1/3 of non-believers. The descriptions are probably of

modern weapons of which John would not have been able to really understand or comprehend. I mean if I showed you a picture of something from 2000 years in the future (think of how fast technology has advanced since you were a child) – how would you describe it?

And that's where we're going to stop today – we've had 7 seal judgments and 6 Trumpet judgments. And there is a whole much more still to come.