

THE BOOK OF REVELATION
Week 2 – Where Have We Been?
September 19, 2017

In Rev. 1 we see Jesus in His glorified state.

In Rev. 2 & 3 we read about the Church Age in the letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor, modern day Turkey.

In Rev. 4 & 5 we are in the throne room of God through John's vision.

The Church on earth is not found from Rev. 4 until Rev. 19:14. We do see the Church on earth again in Rev. 19 as the Church follows Jesus in His physical Second Coming to the earth. My view is that the Church, genuine believers in Jesus (Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus since Pentecost), will not go through the seven years of Tribulation on earth. I believe that the Church will be Raptured, caught up (II Thess. 4:17) to be with the Lord prior to the seven-year Tribulation. The following passages speak to the Rapture of the Church: John 14:1-3; I Cor. 15:51-52; I Thess. 4:15-18.

Jesus' return is in two "stages/phases":

- The coming of Jesus in the air prior to the Tribulation on the earth.
- The physical return of Jesus to the earth when His feet will touch the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem (Zech. 14:4).

The Rapture of the church is the event in which NT believers, Church Age believers, those who have died and those who are alive - are "caught up" (Gk – harpazo; I Thess. 4:16-17) to meet the Lord in the air.

We might look at the Rapture as ending the Church Age.

Rom. 11:25-27 - *For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*²⁶ *And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.'*

- The Church is a mystery (Eph. 3:3). A mystery in Scripture is someone or something that was hidden in the past. God had told the Jewish people that they were to share the truth about the one true God of Israel with the Gentiles (Isa. 43:10; Acts 13:47). Through the Jewish people the Messiah would come and bless all the families of the earth (Gen. 12:3). What the Jewish people didn't know was that the Gentiles would be fellow heirs with them in the body of Christ, the Church (Eph. 3:1-7)

- "Blindness in part" – not all Jewish people are non-believers re: Jesus. The first believers in Jesus were Jewish; the early Church was Jewish. Rom. 11:5 – God has promised a "remnant" (Jewish believers in Jesus) in every generation.

- "fullness of the Gentiles" – the completion of the Gentiles (I'm suggesting) – the end of the Church age - finalizing the responsibility that God has given us, the Church: to be conformed to the image of God's Son, to be witnesses/ambassadors, to make known the manifold grace of God to angels, to be given spiritual gifts, to provoke the Jew to jealousy.

- Then, during the Tribulation, "the time of Jacob's trouble," (Jer. 30:7), Israel will be purged and made ready for her Messiah, at His Second Coming, when Israel, the one third left after the Tribulation (see Zech. 13:8-9) will come to faith in Jesus as God pours His Spirit out on them (Zech. 12:10).

- “My covenant with them, when I take away their sins” – (Jer. 31:33-34 - ...*For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.*; Eze. 36:24-27).

Dan. 9:24-27 – “the backbone of prophecy” – of end times prophecy – does not mention the Church.

CONSIDER: God “snatches away/catches up” NT believers from the earth as the Church Age is complete and God can now make way for His righteous judgment to be poured out on the earth during the Tribulation period.

Revelation 4 – GRAND worship of God. The Church is represented by the 24 elders surrounding God’s throne. I’m suggesting that we have left the Church Age and we see the Church, the NT saints, in heaven worshipping God, wearing crowns which appears to imply that the Church has already appeared before the Judgment Seat of Christ and has received rewards.

Does God tell the Church that we will not suffer in Scripture? NO! On the contrary....

John 16:33 - *In this world you will have tribulation; be of good cheer, I have overcome the world!*

Rom. 8:1 – no condemnation – no wrath of God – because our sins have been forgiven – dealt with...

IMPORTANT TO NOTE: The seven years of Tribulation is for the purpose of cleansing the world from the rebellious and Satan, and purging Israel in preparing them for the Messiah. (Rom. 1:1 – wrath of God on the rebellious). Unparalleled evangelism during the Tribulation!

Revelation 5 - the worship is broken. *And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a scroll. That scroll is the sealed title deed to the earth. Who is worthy to open the scroll and loose its seals? Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and loose its seven seals.*

v. 6 – and we see a Lamb – as though it had been slain.

v. 7 - Jesus takes the scroll out of the hand of Him that sat on the throne. The scroll is the sealed title deed to the earth! The earth will be restored. Paradise will be regained.

Revelation 6 - Jesus begins to unroll the scroll, breaking one seal at a time. Each seal that is broken reveals a judgment that comes upon the earth. What is transpiring on earth is being initiated by GOD! We must remember that. We see a graphic picture of the seven year Tribulation – the time of Jacob’s Trouble (Jer. 30:7), the 70th week of Daniel (Dan. 9:24-27), in Revelation chapters 6 through 18. The purpose of the seven year Tribulation: To make an end of wickedness and wicked ones (Dan. 9:24); to evangelize with countless coming to know the Lord; to purge the nation of Israel and to prepare them for their Messiah. Amidst unparalleled judgment during the Tribulation there will be unparalleled evangelism and salvation!

God's judgments during the tribulation are pictured as seven seals, opened one at a time. The seventh seal opens up to the seven trumpet judgments. The seventh trumpet opens up to the seven bowl judgments. The seven seals, trumpets, and bowls are connected to one another.

The First Half of the Tribulation

We are introduced to the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

The first seal is counterfeit peace. The breaking of the first seal reveals a white horse – and he that sat on him had a bow – notice – NO arrows – just a bow. YET - the rider of the white horse, the rider wearing a crown (laurel wreath; victory crown given at games in Rome) went forth conquering and to conquer. With a bow and no arrows, there is no war as we know it...no killing. This rider is engaged in a peaceful conquering. The Tribulation period begins with a false peace, energized by the antichrist. Cross reference Dan. 9:27 which speaks of the antichrist making a peace treaty with many Jewish people.

The second seal is broken and we see war! A rider on a red horse is revealed. “. . .and power was given to him that sat on it to take peace from the earth, that they should kill one another.”

The third seal reveals famine conditions through a rider on a black horse.

The fourth seal brings death. The rider is on a pale horse. Of course: war and famine result in death!

When the fifth seal is broken, we have a heavenly view. We see people under the altar. These are souls – disembodied souls; no bodies - these are those who are redeemed who have not yet been resurrected (resurrection – body and soul united). These are those who were slain during the Tribulation (they had been left behind following the Rapture). Many will become believers during the Tribulation. The martyrs are crying out *How long, O Lord, holy....* How long are you going to let this go on without bringing vengeance on those who are slaughtering the saints? God's response: wait, rest...be patient...until the rest of their fellow servants/brethren will be killed.

Because of the intensified persecution of believers at the middle of the Tribulation (aligning with Rev. 12), this fifth seal seems to depict the middle of the Tribulation.

Events in the Middle of the Tribulation

- The seven-year covenant/peace treaty is broken by the antichrist (Dan. 9:27).
- Satan is cast down to the earth from heaven (Rev. 12:7-9).
- Extreme persecution of the Jews and of the Tribulation saints (Rev. 12:13).
- Jewish people flee into the wilderness where a place has been prepared for them (Rev. 12:6, 14). “They” will feed them for 1260 days (cross reference to Matt. 25:37-40).
 - Rise of the beast from the sea (Rev. 13:1-10). This is the antichrist.
 - The antichrist receives a head wound and is seemingly brought back to life - one of his heads was *...as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed* (Rev. 13:3-4).
- The “abomination of desolation” when the antichrist sets himself up as god to be worshipped in the rebuilt (3rd) Temple (Matt. 24:15; II Thess. 2:3-4)

- Rise of the beast from the earth (Rev. 13:11-17). This is the false prophet who performs signs and wonders (Rev. 13:13-14) and deceives “those who dwell on the earth” into worshipping the antichrist.
- The false church is the apostate church, the “great harlot” (Rev. 17).
- The mark of the beast – the false prophet requires a mark given to all of antichrist’s followers that permits them to buy and sell (Rev. 13:16-18).

The sixth seal is broken and we return to viewing the happenings on earth. Earthquake...the sun became black...the moon became like blood...the stars of heaven fell to the earth...and the heaven departs like a scroll.... Tremendous fear noted in vv. 15-17. They scream for the rocks and mountains to fall on them. They hide from the face of Him Who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. We need to know that the verb *helthen* in the Gk – for “has come” is aorist indicative which refers to a previous arrival of the wrath, not something that is about to take place. The wrath began at the breaking of the first seal as it was initiated from the throne room of God!

Revelation 7 - we find a periodic respite and we see blessing, and protection. We see GOD’S GRACE!!!! This is an intermission/an interlude that we mentioned as part of the structure of Revelation last week. 144,000 Jewish men are chosen as God’s servants. They are sealed; nothing can harm them (Rev. 7:2-3).

The 144,000 are the “first fruits” (Rev. 14:4) – the first of the Jewish people to be saved during the Tribulation. I’m suggesting that this sealing occurred at the beginning of the Tribulation. These 144,000 were chosen to be protected.

In Rev. 7:9ff we see a great multitude which no one could number – from all nations, kindreds, peoples, and tongues – dressed/clothed in white robes (Rev. 7:13). These are the ones who come out of the great Tribulation who will be martyred. Their robes will be made white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14).

This enormous multitude, uncountable, represents the fruit of the 144,000 Jews. We see EVANGELISM during the Tribulation! God is longsuffering. He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (II Pet. 3:9). Not everyone will be saved (II Pet. 3:7).

Is the great multitude of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues who are saved during the Tribulation part of the Church? These are Tribulation saints. While the Restrainer, the Holy Spirit, has been taken out of the way (II Thess. 2:6-7), He continues to regenerate and bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

We ended last semester in Rev. 8:1-5 with the opening of the seventh seal. When the seventh seal is opened, the six trumpet judgments spill out. We need to know that the seven seals are keeping the scroll sealed so...the seven seals encompass the entire period of the Tribulation culminating with the return of Jesus. How does that work? The seven seals are holding tight the scroll. In the book of Revelation we read that when the seventh seal – the last seal is opened – very rapidly the remaining judgments are poured

out onto the earth through the trumpet judgments and the bowl judgments. Thus, we can say that the seven seals contain all the judgments to the end when Jesus returns.

Rev. 8:1 – *When He opened the seventh seal...there's silence.*

This silence is deafening! *there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.* The flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder coming from the throne of God will cease. The four living creatures, angelic beings, will cease their praise of God. The 24 elders will suspend their declaration about the worthiness of the Lamb. The heavenly hosts will stop their singing, and the Tribulation Saints will cease their praise. An eerie, foreboding silence will move across heaven. Everyone will wait in anticipation of what is to come next. This silence appears to reflect the awe and anticipation re: the judgments that God is about to unleash on the earth. This is the calm before the storm.

Scripture reveals a pattern of silence associated with the recognition of God's holiness and righteous judgment:

Psa. 76:8-9 - *You caused judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared and was still,* ⁹ *When God arose to judgment*

Hab. 2:20 - *But the LORD is in His holy temple.*

Let all the earth keep silence before Him.

Zeph. 1:7 - *Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD;*

For the day of the LORD is at hand,

Zech. 2:13 - *Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for He is aroused from His holy habitation!"*

Consider the silence concerning God's just/righteous judgment in this light. What can man say? Who can speak? In the presence of God there can be no defense spoken!

AND - thirty minutes? That's all? But it's all that we need to tell us that something tremendous is about to take place. Depending upon the circumstance, 30 minutes can seem like an eternity!

WHY trumpet judgments? Why were trumpets blown in Biblical times in Israel? Trumpets were blown in Biblical times to alert the people – to warn of impending danger, to call people to war, to call an assembly of people together, to celebrate the coronation of a king, to call people to repentance. All in all, when trumpets were blown – people were to take notice – to LISTEN - and respond in many cases.

The prophets in the OT linked the blowing of trumpets to the future Day of Judgment – the Tribulation: Joel 2:1-2a - *Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand: ² A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.*

Rev. 8:2 - *I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets* – seven specific angels standing before God – having close access to God – appearing to be ready to receive instructions from God.

Rev. 8:3-4 – *Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon*

the golden altar (the altar of incense) which was before the throne. ⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. It's important to note that the prayers of the saints include petitions for justice. We read of the souls of those martyred (Tribulation saints) under the altar when the fifth seal was broken (Rev. 6:10) crying out for God to judge and avenge their blood...to take action against those who killed them.

Rev. 8:5 - *Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar (appears to be the altar of burnt offering), and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.* Could this be God's response to the prayers of the suffering saints on earth and the prayers of the martyred saints? God's sovereign plan "mysteriously" incorporates the prayers of His people.

When believers are removed from this world – what will happen? The Holy Spirit Who now restrains will be taken out of the world. Restrains what? Evil! With the Holy Spirit taken out of the earth, evil will NOT be restrained? Can we even imagine? There will be CHAOS on this globe! HOW can there be MORE chaos than what we are experiencing now?

We read in the OT that the Holy Spirit restrained evil (Gen. 6:3) and regenerated (Gen. 15:6).

John 16:8 - *And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:*

II Thess. 2:7 – NOW the Holy Spirit is restraining evil. When He is removed – when the Church is caught up to meet the Lord in the air (I Thess. 4:15-18) – that restraining of evil is gone!

Do we pray for Jesus' return when we know that many will be left on this earth – friends, loved ones – who will be the recipients of God's wrath?

We see God's GRACE throughout the Tribulation! HOW? The Gospel will be broadcast through the 144,000, the two witnesses, the angelic pronouncements of the Gospel. Amidst unparalleled judgment during the Tribulation, the world will see unparalleled evangelism leading to COUNTLESS NUMBERS being saved!

We don't understand; we cannot fathom how this will all spill out. BUT GOD is in control and it will ALL transpire according to God's plan. And so we pray and leave it with HIM! And we share the Gospel with an urgency knowing that those who do not accept will die in their sin. And should Jesus come within the next moment, those left behind will experience the vicious attacks of the antichrist amidst utter chaos in a world truly gone mad.

I'm suggesting that the trumpet judgments in Rev. 8 are in the 2nd half of the Tribulation.

In his vision, the Apostle John watched as the seventh seal was opened and the seven angels were given seven trumpets. These trumpets represent specific catastrophes, many of which will destroy large portions of the earth.

Rev. 8:6 – *So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.* Intensified judgments from God.

The first four trumpets....

The First Trumpet

Rev. 8:7 - *The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.* Hail and fire and blood were *thrown to the earth*. A third of the trees were burned up; all green grass was burned up. The effect of this judgment is limited. Consider: while this judgment is devastating, God will set a limit. We see God's controlled release of judgments. We see God's grace in the midst of unparalleled judgment!

The Second Trumpet

Rev. 8:8-9 - *Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood.⁹ And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.*

Something like great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea.

Figurative language – what was thrown into the sea appeared to John to be *like* a great mountain that was burning. Remember, this was a vision. Some Bible teachers have suggested that this “something” could be a meteorite. These four trumpet judgments are natural cataclysmic events. But, this object – not a mountain but *like* a great mountain – is *thrown* into the sea by some agent. Could it be thrown from the hand of God? We see this action coming from the throne room of God. Yes, the angels are being given the judgments to impact the earth. Yet, we see God's purposeful control in this action.

The Third Trumpet

Rev. 8:10-11 - *Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning 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 men died from the water, because it was made bitter.* The context of the third trumpet judgment appears to be describing a cosmic/cosmological event involving a large physical object affecting a limited portion of the world. This star that is burning will fall on a third of the rivers and on springs of water. Water is a life-giving source (oxygen/food). The star's name is *Wormwood* which is a non-poisonous plant known for its bitterness.

Jesus provides living water (John 7:38-39). God gives the earth-dwellers (the non-believers during the Tribulation) bitter water which causes death as they have rejected the life-giving water from Jesus!

The Fourth Trumpet

Rev. 8:12 - *Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.* Here we see severe cosmic disturbances among a limited part of the planetary heaven. A portion of the sun, the moon, and the stars were struck. The diminishing light during the day and during the night might be due to the massive dust kicked up into the atmosphere when the large meteor or asteroid associated with the third trumpet judgment (perhaps) strikes the earth.

The first four trumpet judgments are separated from the final three as the last three trumpet judgments are designated as “WOE” judgments!

It appears that these first four describe natural catastrophes that hammer the earth during the Tribulation. Remember, God is cleansing the earth and is going to eventually dissolve the earth.

In his book *There's A New World Coming* (1973), Hal Lindsey wrote: *"Although it is possible for God to supernaturally pull off every miracle in the Book of Revelation and use totally unheard of means to do it, I personally believe that all the enormous ecological catastrophes described in this chapter (Revelation 8) are the direct result of nuclear weapons. In actuality, man inflicts these judgments on himself. God simply steps back and removes His restraining influence from man, allowing him to do what comes naturally out of his sinful nature. In fact, if the Book of Revelation had never been written, we might well predict these very catastrophes within fifty years or less!"*

Britt Gillette – Global Government – RaptureReady

Is the world moving closer to a global government? Free trade; many see themselves as "citizen of the world." Borders between are being erased! What does Scripture tell us about future global government? The Bible tells us that the antichrist will conquer nations and create a global empire. Rev. 13:4 - *So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"*

How does globalization look in an age of nuclear weapons? How is globalization possible? Worldwide nuclear war ends with the total destruction of the planet. Nuclear war doesn't allow for limits such as a third of the world will be affected, a third of the seas will be polluted, etc. The Bible tells us that global government is coming, and the antichrist will be its ruler (Rev. 13:7).

We know that God is going to dissolve this world...by HIS POWER!

The seven trumpet judgments are divided into two groups: the first four affect the natural systems of the earth (Rev. 8:7-12); the last three affect men (Rev. 9:1, 13; 11:15).

TO BE CONTINUED....

QUESTIONS:

V8 moments?

What are YOUR questions?

What impacted you? How will this change your actions?

STRONGLY SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Reread this handout.

Read the handout for Week 3 when you receive it.

Read Joel 2. Determine the context re: the timeframe. Make observations. Ask questions.

Share what you are learning with someone!