REVELATION: What’s Coming Next?

Week 2: Tribulation begins

1. Heaven’s Point of View
2. Where is the Church?

(*Revelation 4:1-2)*

1. The Church and the Rapture
2. The Bible talks about the church being ‘caught up’ in the air (*1 Thessalonians 4:15-18).* The debate is when this will take place and if it’s the same event as the visible return of Christ on earth.
3. Pre-Tribulation Rapture has the church raptured before the Tribulation period.
4. Mid-Tribulation Rapture has the church raptured during the Tribulation period.
5. Post-Tribulation Rapture has the church raptured after the tribulation simultaneously occurring with the visible return of Jesus to the earth.
6. Why this study leans toward a Pre-Tribulation Rapture
7. The Bible never says the church will go through the Tribulation period; in fact, the church is mentioned more than twenty times in the first three chapters of Revelation but there is no mention of the church between *Revelation 4:1*and *Revelation 19:1.*
8. Jesus comes to meet the church in the Rapture while He comes with his church in the second coming. The church goes up from the earth in the Rapture and it comes down to the earth in the second coming.
9. No one can know the day or the hour of His coming, but if the church goes through the tribulation period, some will know the day because it will be seven years from the signing of the seven-year covenant (see *Daniel 9:24-27).*
10. The church must go to heaven for the marriage of the Lamb before the second coming at the end of the Tribulation period (*Revelation 19:11-14).*
11. The Anti-Christ will for a time prevail against the Saints during the Tribulation period, but the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church (*Matthew 16:18).*
12. The Tribulation period is more consistent with God’s grace, love, and mercy.
13. John being caught up to heaven seems to be
14. Heavenly Visions of The Future:

(*Revelation 4:2-11)*

1. What will be Shown
2. Jesus tells John that he would be shown *“what must take place after this” (Revelation 4:1)*
3. Some interpret Jesus’ words to refer to events which took place before John’s lifetime such as the Roman invasion and destruction of Jerusalem, but this would not fit with what Jesus tells John
4. Others interpret Jesus’ words to refer to events which would take place after John’s lifetime but before our own, but these events have not been fulfilled in any sort of literal sense, the text would have to be interpreted as purely symbolic and even then, that would be quite a stretch.
5. What fits the text best is to interpret the events described in the upcoming chapters of Revelation as literal events with symbolic language which have not yet taken place.
6. Descriptions of Heaven’s Throne
7. John seemed to have a sort of outer body experience like Paul’s experience recorded in *2 Corinthians 12:9-10*
8. God is seated on the throne in heaven, the throne is not unoccupied. Jesus is seated, *“far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that can be named” (Ephesians 1:21-220)*
9. Jesus is described as having the appearance of jasper and sardius, most likely because they are the first and last stones in the breastplate of the High Priest and Jesus is described as our High Priest.
10. A rainbow surrounds the throne as a reminder that God is always faithful to His promises
11. Around the throne were twenty-four elders, most likely representative of the people of God, described as wearing white garments representing the righteousness of Christ and gold crowns representing our status as co-heirs with Christ.
12. The lightning and thunder sound reminiscent of God’s presence manifested at Mt. Sinai
13. Seven torches of fire which are the seven spirits of God represent the Holy Spirit
14. A sea of glass showing calm
15. Unique angelic creatures most likely cherubim are around the throne, the spectacular angelic creatures described in *Ezekiel 1:4-14 and Ezekiel 10:10-22.* Different thoughts on what their faces represent.

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1. Heaven’s Anthem
2. The four living creatures never cease to continually glorify God
3. God’s holiness is emphasized here and elsewhere in scripture, particularly in the presence of God.
4. The twenty-four elders fell on their knees as we should to worship God for who He is.
5. The twenty-four elders casted their crowns representing victory not royalty before the throne
6. They acknowledged God as the Creator and sustainer of all things
7. They acknowledge that God deserves all glory and honor and power
8. The Scroll and the Lamb

*(Revelation 5:1-14)*

1. The One on the Throne
2. While Chapter 4 was focused on Heaven’s throne, Chapter 5 shifts the focus to who is on the throne
3. John describes an unusual scroll because it had writing on the front and back. A roll once finished would be fastened with strings and the strings were sealed with wax at the knots. This scroll had seven seals, meaning seven strings on this scroll each string sealed with wax.
4. There was no one in heaven or earth, living or dead who was worthy to open the scroll, there is only one who is worthy-the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world, Jesus the Christ
5. Jesus is referenced by two titles from the Old Testament that symbolize who He is: Lion of the Tribe of Judah from *Genesis 49:9-10*, and Root of David from *Isaiah 11:10*
6. John sees a Lamb, who is standing, but also looking as though it had been slain, conveying in imagery both the sacrifice and triumph of Jesus Christ’s first coming on earth as the perfect Lamb
7. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes representing perfect omnipotence and omniscience, knows everything and sees everything and has limitless power.
8. The twenty-four elders representing the people of God bow down, worship and hold a golden bowl of incense representing the prayers of the saints.
9. The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures sing a new song of praise before the Lamb. The song speaks of what Jesus has done and what he will do, showing why he alone is worthy to open the scroll. The song also draws attention to the nature of the church itself.
10. Believers are ‘kings’ because of their royal birth and ‘priests’ because they need no other mediator besides Jesus Himself.
11. Angels join in worshiping the Lamb, but for different reasons than the church. Unlike the church they are not worshiping as recipients of salvation but as observers of it. They can clearly see the greatness of who God is and what God is doing (*see Job 12:7-10)*
12. An Overview of the Tribulation
13. Introducing the Elements of the Tribulation:

(*Revelation 6:1-17)*

1. The First Horseman & The Start of the Great Tribulation
2. The Great Tribulation will be a seven-year period, which will begin when the Antichrist confirms a seven-year covenant with Israel, according to *Daniel 9:27.* Daniel tells us that on God’s prophetic clock there would be 490 years. The clock is stopped at 483 years currently following the death and resurrection of the Messiah. The remaining 7 years begin once treaty is made.
3. The rider on the first horse is said to be riding on a white horse like Christ will at the end of the book of Revelation, but this figure riding the white horse is most likely the Antichrist
4. The Bible speaks of the Antichrist in two ways: 1. Spirit of Antichrist which is referring to the deceitful and philosophical system of Satanic influence in the world and 2. An individual political leader to come.
5. Notice that description John gives of the rider on the horse speaks of him having a bow, a symbol of military strength in his day, but doesn’t mention arrows so many will see this man as a man of peace.
6. The rider wears a crown, signifying head of state status yet while typically a ruler wears a crown that was earned or inherited, this individual will be offered this status. The world will be looking for a leader like this man at this time.
7. The Second Horseman brings War
8. The second horseman will remove ‘peace’ from the earth and war and chaos will ensue on a global scale that is far worse than anything we have seen in human history thus far.
9. The Bible tells us that the peace the Antichrist seems to make will not last long, and that he will be like a wolf in sheep’s clothing (*see 1 Thessalonians 5:3)* presenting himself as a peacemaker when in fact he will bring war.
10. Notice that the “rider” of the horse was “granted authority” to take away peace and bring war, even now in the Great Tribulation period, God is ultimately sovereign.
11. Our modern age is marked by conflict. Since World War II, there have been over 150 wars and armed conflicts throughout the world and even now war rages in Ukraine.
12. The Third Horseman brings Economic Calamity
13. The third horseman is described by John as a “black horse” symbolizing grief, pain and mourning holding a pair of scales symbolizing economic disaster and famine.
14. The voice John hears states that prices for goods would be the equivalent of twelve times higher than normal.
15. Fine commodities such as oil and wine would still be available but only for those who could afford them.
16. History has already given us several examples of how quickly economic collapse can occur and what it can lead to (Example: 1929 Economic collapse led to the Great Depression, rise of Hitler and outbreak of World War II)
17. The Fourth Horseman brings Death
18. The fourth horseman brings death on a scale unlike anything we have seen thus far in human history. There will be a tremendous death toll because of the dictatorship of the antichrist, war, famine and disease and other calamities.
19. Notice again that the fourth horseman is “given authority” to wreak death on the world.
20. In a matter of days, a fourth of the world population will die.

*“It staggers the imagination to realize that one-fourth of the world’s population will be destroyed within a matter of days. When I think about this awful judgement that awaits the Christ rejecting world, it gives no satisfaction to my heart; it fires me up to get out the message that God has provided an alternative in Jesus Christ.” – Hal Lindsey*

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1. Imagine what Heaven will look like
2. Blood Cries Out
3. The fifth seal represents those who have been martyred for the sake of Christ, notice they are mentioned as being under the altar of God symbolizing that their life blood was poured out as a pleasing offering to God.
4. Some scholars see these martyrs as only those who will die for Jesus during the Tribulation, while others see them as representing those who died for Jesus throughout all of history. Most likely, these martyrs are those who have died for Christ throughout the church age.
5. What is clear is that persecution and martyrdom for accepting Christ will be guaranteed during the worst of the Tribulation. What is also clear though as we will see shortly is that there will be a harvest of saved souls during the Tribulation period.
6. God’s people have always cried out, “How long?”, until injustice is brought to justice. God tells these martyrs to be patient and that all appointed martyrs must die and then at the right moment, God will avenge their deaths.
7. These martyrs are given white robes symbolizing the righteousness of Jesus
8. Don’t Look Up
9. The sixth seal describes a massive worldwide cataclysmic earthquake accompanied by cosmic disruptions, perhaps something like a meteor shower.
10. John’s descriptions of what he sees are *real* but poetic. The Bible does not use scientific language, but rather speaks from the viewpoint of one observing. For example, we use terms such as *sunrise* and *sunset* to describe what we observe, but the sun does neither in scientific terms.
11. We have already experienced major natural cataclysmic disasters, as Jesus predicted would increase in *Matthew 24*, but never on the scale that Revelation describes.
12. All people remaining are brought low and hide in shame and dread of God’s wrath. Sinners have always tried to hide from the light of God’s presence due to their sin
13. Who can stand? Only those who trust in Jesus Christ for salvation as chapter 7 will show us.
14. Reasons for the Tribulation Period
15. To defeat Satan, the Anti-Christ, and the False prophet (*see Revelation 19-20)*
16. To uphold Jerusalem’s cause and punish those who mistreat the Jews (*See Zechariah 12-14)*
17. To bring the Jewish people to accept Jesus as the promised Messiah (*see Zechariah 13:8-9, Romans 11:25-26)*
18. To punish those who claim Israel’s land (*See Ezekiel 36:1-38)*
19. To bring judgement to the inhabitants of earth for sin and rejection of the Gospel (see *Isaiah 24:1-6, 26:20-21)*
20. To bring sinners to repentance and Jesus (*See Isaiah 26:9)*
21. Servants of God During the Tribulation

(*Revelation 7:1-17)*

1. 144,000 Servants Sealed
2. The Four angels remind us that God is ultimately in control of what is taking place on earth even during this period. These angels delay the destructive forces of God’s judgement until these servants are sealed. There is debate as to who these angels specifically are.
3. Seals denoted ownership and authenticity, and here, God specifically seals 144,000 on earth during the Tribulation. Elsewhere in the New Testament, we are told that God has sealed us as believers in Christ with the Holy Spirit (*see Ephesians 1:13)*
4. These servants of God are sealed somehow for some type of service, most likely evangelistic service during the Great Tribulation
5. Some say the 144,000 are symbolic of the church, groups like Jehovah’s witnesses believe they are a select group which will go to heaven. The text just does not support these conclusions.
6. The 144,000 are clearly Jewish, having been, “*from every tribe of Israel” (Revelation 7:4-8)*. They are Messianic Jews.
7. A Picture of the Church
8. The results of the evangelist work of the 144,000 is shown with the harvest of souls that the rest of chapter 7 talks about. This shows that the Gospel will continue to be shared and will lead to the salvation of many during the Great Tribulation.
9. We are told that this crowd will be large and be diverse. Notice that we are not all the same now and we will not all be the same in heaven. God’s heart has always been for people from every tribe and language to be saved. (*See Genesis 12:1-2, Isaiah 56:7).*
10. They are clothed in white symbolizing the righteousness of Christ, holding palm branches evoking Palm Sunday, an expression of declaring victory and salvation.
11. A scene of worship to God who is the source of our salvation. The Bible says that “*there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12).*
12. The saved saints described in this scene are most likely martyrs from the Great Tribulation.
13. A hint at what awaits all of us in heaven:
14. Worship God before His throne
15. Serve Him
16. Shelter in His presence
17. We will be completely satisfied in the presence of our Savior
18. The Lamb is with us as our Shepherd who will guide us to himself as the source of living water
19. God will comfort us and wipe every tear from our eyes, giving us a picture of the love and comfort that awaits us

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1. Silence in Heaven as Judgements Begin

(*Revelation 8:1-5)*

1. The Seventh Seal
2. As the seventh and final seal is opened, we are told there is *silence in heaven*, for what seems to be about half an hour.
3. Most likely, the silence is a somber awestruck silence at the judgements about to come now that the seals are opened, and the scroll can be opened.
4. According to Jewish tradition, there are seven angels that continually stand before God’s presence, perhaps archangels.
5. Trumpets sound the alarm for war and battle to come.
6. Some believe this additional angel is Jesus or another powerful angelic being. The golden censer was used in the Old Testament temple which contained charcoal that would be burned under a layer of incense.
7. Prayer literally proceeds and sets in motion the consummation of history. God moves when His people pray