

The Events of the Tribulation

The book of Revelation contains a lot of information about the seven-year tribulation period. However, Revelation can be difficult to read and even more difficult to understand. In order to make things more clear I'd like to summarize this information and present a brief outline of the events that will one day take place. I realize that entire books have been written about this subject, but my goal is simply to offer a straightforward summary.

For the purposes of this lesson I'm only going to focus on what Revelation says about the tribulation. It's true that Revelation addresses other topics as well (such as the Millennial Kingdom and the Eternal State) but I'll save those subjects for another time.

The First Half of the Tribulation

The seven-year tribulation begins when the Lamb (which symbolizes Jesus) opens 7 seals. Each one of those seals contains judgments, which are usually called the Seal Judgments. We'll talk about them in a minute, but first there's one other item to discuss.

Before the First Seal: the two witnesses begin their ministry. This isn't mentioned until later in Revelation, but because their ministry spans the entire first half of the tribulation it seemed like a good idea to mention this now. The Lord will appoint two witnesses who will preach the gospel:

Revelation 11:3: "And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth."

There's been a lot of speculation about who these two witnesses might be, but since the Bible doesn't tell us I'll leave that subject alone. What we do know is that they'll prophesy for 1,260 days, which is the same as 42 months or three-and-a-half years. During that period they'll proclaim the gospel. God will give them great power so that no one can stop them:

Revelation 11:5-6: “And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.”

People will try to kill these two witnesses but they will fail. All those who seek to harm them will be killed by being burned to death. These two witnesses will be a voice of truth, and the antichrist will be unable to silence them until their ministry is complete.

During the course of their ministry a great many things will happen. In Heaven Jesus will begin by opening the 7 seals.

The First Seal: the antichrist launches his war. We can see that here:

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.”

The person on the white horse is the antichrist. At the beginning of the tribulation the antichrist will start a war and begin conquering other nations.

The Second Seal: a world war begins. The war that the antichrist started will escalate into a full-scale world war:

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.”

What started out as a smaller conflict will blossom into a war which will consume the entire planet. Peace will be taken from the world and the nations will attack one another.

The Third Seal: global famine. The world war will trigger a worldwide famine, and food prices will skyrocket:

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.”

The penny mentioned here is actually a day's wage. Food

prices will increase so greatly that it will take an entire day's wage just to buy a single measure of wheat! The global war is coupled with a terrible global famine.

In Bible times, oil and wine were often used as medicines. It's possible that although there will be a terrible famine, medical help will be readily available.

The Fourth Seal: hundreds of millions of people die. The world war will result in the death of 25% of the planet's population:

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.”

Given that the world's population is currently 8 billion people, that would mean almost *two billion people* would be killed. (The exact number depends on how many people are still alive when the fourth seal is opened.) The passage goes on to explain that they'll die by military conflict, by starving to death, and by wild animals (which tend to enter human-populated areas whenever there's a massive famine which robs them of other food sources).

The Fifth Seal: intense persecution of Christians. During the tribulation many people will be saved. However, they'll be intensely persecuted and many of them will be killed:

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.”

All throughout the tribulation those who believe in Jesus will be martyred in huge numbers. This persecution starts at the beginning of the tribulation period.

As an aside, there are people who believe that the rapture takes place in the middle of the tribulation. They say that the first half of the tribulation is a time of peace and harmony, and the real horrors don't begin until after its halfway point. For that reason God doesn't take the church out of the world until then.

The reason I have trouble taking this viewpoint seriously is because the first three years of the tribulation are *not* a time of peace. Soon after the tribulation begins *a billion people are killed*, and countless *millions* of Christians are executed for their faith! In fact, after the sixth seal is opened even the *wicked* will realize that the time of God's wrath has come! If God is going to rescue the church from the time of His wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9) then the church needs to be raptured *before* the tribulation begins, not after it's already started.

The Sixth Seal: a terrible earthquake. Throughout the tribulation the Lord will send earthquakes to judge the nations. This particular earthquake isn't as bad as the big one that will happen later in the tribulation. Even so, it's still exceptionally devastating:

Revelation 6:12-14: “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.”

This earthquake will be so bad that “every mountain and island” will be moved. The catastrophic 2011 earthquake in Japan moved the entire island of Japan a few inches. This earthquake, however, will move more than just Japan. It will move *everything!*

Along with the earthquake are other devastating signs. The sun will stop shining for a period of time (just as happened in ancient Egypt during the plagues), the moon will turn red, and there will be a devastating meteor shower. These things will convince mankind that God is angry with them and is pouring out His wrath:

Revelation 6:15-17: “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?”

The first few years of the tribulation are *not* years of

relative peace and happiness. Things will be so bad that people will *beg to be buried alive so they're hidden from the face of God!* Everyone, from the mightiest king to the lowliest slave, will be in abject terror of the awful judgments that God is pouring out on the world.

The 144,000 Witnesses: There's one final seal left to be opened, but before Jesus opens it seal there's a pause. God will use this time to anoint 12,000 Jews from 12 different tribes:

Revelation 7:4: “And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.”

After these people are sealed (so that the antichrist can't harm them), they're sent to preach the gospel to the whole world. God will mightily blesses their efforts and use them to save millions of people:

Revelation 7:9-10: “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; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”

However, these new converts will be executed by the antichrist:

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.”

The preaching of the 144,000 witnesses will result in a tremendous harvest, and millions of people will be saved. These new converts won't live very long because the antichrist will ruthlessly hunt them down and execute them.

After this has happened the Lord will open the 7th and final seal.

The Seventh Seal: 7 trumpet judgments. The 7th seal contains within it 7 other judgments. These are usually called the trumpet judgments:

Revelation 8:1-2: “And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.”

The trumpets will be sounded, one by one. (So far we're *still* in the first half of the tribulation.)

The First Trumpet: one-third of the world's forests are burned to the ground. We see that here:

Revelation 8:7: “The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.”

In the Old Testament there were times when God used hail to perform judgments, and here we see Him doing it again. In the tribulation God will use hail and fire to destroy all of the world's grass, along with one-third of the world's forests. The first trumpet will cause major damage to plant life (to say nothing of all those who will die in the fires).

The Second Trumpet: one-third of all sea life dies. That is found here:

Revelation 8:8-9: “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; 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.”

While the first trumpet was a land-based judgment, this one is focused on the sea. When the second trumpet sounds several things will happen: one third of the sea will become blood (just as the Nile became blood during the plagues of Egypt), one third of all sea life will die, and one third of all ships will be destroyed.

The “great mountain burning with fire” may be a meteor, or it might be something supernatural. Whatever it is, the effect it has on the ocean is devastating.

The Third Trumpet: one-third of all fresh water is contaminated. While the previous judgment was against the sea, this one is against the world's supply of fresh water:

Revelation 8:10-11: “And the third angel

sounded, 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; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.”

It seems that a meteor will fall to the earth and contaminate one-third of the rivers and other sources of water. This will cause a tremendous loss of life.

Up to this point, one-third of the world's oceans have been destroyed, one-third of all forests have been burned to the ground, and one-third of the world's fresh water supply has been poisoned. I don't know how many people will die as a result of all this but it may be an enormous number – and that doesn't even count all the people who will be executed for their faith in Christ.

The Fourth Trumpet: one-third of the Earth's supply of light is removed. During this time something will happen that blocks a large amount of light:

Revelation 8:12: “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, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.”

One-third of the light from the sun, moon, and stars will be blocked. This makes the days and nights noticeably darker. The passage doesn't say how long this lasts, or if the effect is permanent. (It may be a giant dust cloud in the upper atmosphere from the asteroid impact we saw earlier, or it might be something else entirely.)

Through these judgments the Lord is systematically devastating the environment. The oceans, the land, the rivers, and even the sunlight are cursed by one-third.

However, as bad as things have been up to this point, they're about to become even worse:

Revelation 8:13: “And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!”

The Fifth Trumpet: an army of demons is set free. So far the world has been plagued with war, famine, hail, earthquakes, and devastating ecological disasters. All of that pales in comparison to what comes next. God is going to set free an army of imprisoned demons to torment mankind:

Revelation 9:1-4: “And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. 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. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.”

Keep in mind that these aren't actual locusts, but are

demons. We know this because the locusts have a king:

Revelation 9:11: “And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.”

However, the book of Proverbs tells us that real locusts *don't have kings*:

Proverbs 30:27: “The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands;”

Who is the king of the creatures? A demon named Apollyon. Who opened the door to the bottomless pit? An angel that fell from Heaven – in other words, a demon. It's worth noting that the bottomless pit is a place where *demons* are imprisoned! These aren't insects, but are demons – an immense army of demons. These demons are told to harm only those who aren't saved.

The demons are then released and begin tormenting mankind:

Revelation 9:5-6: “And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.”

When these demons “sting” someone they inflict terrible, excruciating pain that lasts for five months. This pain is so great that people will try to kill themselves *and they will fail*. People will desperately long to die so that they can escape the unbearable

pain *but they won't be able to die.*

But the demonic invasion is not over yet.

The Sixth Trumpet: demons execute one-third of mankind.

Keep in mind that by the time this takes place, the effects of global war will have wiped out at least 25% of mankind. These demons will kill 33% of whoever has managed to say alive up to this point:

Revelation 9:13-19: “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, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. 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. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.”

The world's population is currently around 8 billion people (although it's impossible to know what the population will be when the tribulation begins). Earlier a fourth of the world's

population was killed. If one-third of those survivors are executed then that means those two judgments alone have killed *half* of the world's population! Billions of people have died – and we're *still* in the first half of the tribulation.

This passage is telling us about a massive army of 200 million *demons*. These aren't soldiers from a foreign nation, and they're not human beings. This is a demonic army that's controlled by four demons. They've been imprisoned for a long time, waiting for the day when they will be set loose to slaughter mankind. The demons will use fire, smoke, and brimstone to kill people in horrific numbers.

It's terrifying to imagine an army of demons ravaging the entire planet, killing people by the millions, but that's what will happen during the tribulation. One might imagine that when these terrible things happen many people will cry out to God and seek His forgiveness and mercy, but that's not the case. Instead people will harden their hearts:

Revelation 9:20-21: “And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.”

The Second Half of the Tribulation

We've finally reached the second half of the tribulation. Up to this point things have been very bad – and they're not going to improve.

The Death and Resurrection of the Two Witnesses: The ministry of the two witnesses only lasts for the first half of the

tribulation. When that time is over the antichrist will kill them and the world will rejoice over their death:

Revelation 11:7-10: “And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.”

The dead bodies of the two witnesses will lie in the streets of Jerusalem for three days, while the entire world will look at the bodies (presumably on live TV) and rejoice. However, their rejoicing will be cut short because God will resurrect them:

Revelation 11:11-12: “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.”

After they ascend into Heaven the Lord will send an earthquake which will devastate Jerusalem (which is under the antichrist's control at this point):

Revelation 11:13: “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.”

In that earthquake a tenth of Jerusalem will be devastated and 7,000 people will die.

The Conquest of Jerusalem: After the 6th trumpet sounds, but before the 7th and last trumpet sounds, there's a pause in the action as Jerusalem is conquered:

Revelation 11:2: “But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.”

This verse tells us that the Gentiles will conquer Jerusalem and control it for 42 months, or three-and-a-half years. In other words, the Gentiles (meaning the antichrist, since he's the world ruler at this time) will control Jerusalem for all of the second half of the tribulation. This is convincing evidence that we've finally entered the second half of the tribulation.

This conquest is part of the antichrist's effort to exterminate the Jews. Satan will try very hard to kill all of them:

Revelation 12:13-14: And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is

nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Because of the intense persecution that will arise, God will divinely protect the Jews by bringing them to a hiding place in “the wilderness” and sheltering them there for three-and-a-half years. Enraged, the devil will turn his attention to persecuting Christians.

The Death and Resurrection of the Antichrist: At some point during the middle of the tribulation the antichrist will be killed and then miraculously resurrected. This will cause the entire world to worship him:

Revelation 13:3-5: “And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshiped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshiped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.”

The only ones who won't worship him are those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Everyone else will be deceived.

God will allow the antichrist to continue for 42 months, or three-and-a-half years. This represents the entire second half of the tribulation – the same period when the Gentiles will control Jerusalem, and the same period when the Jews will be hiding in the wilderness. In the first half of the tribulation the antichrist will wage a world war. In the second half he will control the world.

In fact, God will even give him the power to overcome the saints, and he will kill them in large numbers:

Revelation 13:7: “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.”

This is when the 144,000 witnesses will be martyred. Their ministry, like that of the two witnesses, only takes place during the first half of the tribulation.

The False Prophet and the Mark of the Beast: This is when the false prophet begins his work:

Revelation 13:12-18: “And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the

earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.”

The false prophet will do amazing signs and miracles to convince everyone to worship the idol that he set up in the temple in Jerusalem. He will then go further and force everyone to take the famous Mark of the Beast, which is either the antichrist's name or the number of his name (666). The only ones who will refuse to do this are those whose names are written in the Book of Life. Everyone else will take the Mark and be lost forever.

Taking the Mark is an unforgivable sin. No one who takes the Mark and worships the beast can be saved. That is the point of no return:

Revelation 14:9-11: “And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the

presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”

The Seventh Trumpet: God takes over control of the world.

After all of the judgments that have taken place you might expect the 7th trumpet to contain more horrors, but instead this happens:

Revelation 11:15: “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

Keep in mind that at this point Jesus has not yet returned to Earth to kill the antichrist, rescue the Jews, and begin the Millennial Kingdom. But despite this, when the 7th trumpet sounds the Lord's reign over the world officially begins. The angel is very clear about this: “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ”. The 24 elders (which represent the raptured church in Heaven) say the same thing:

Revelation 11:16-17: “And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshiped 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.”

When these things are proclaimed in Heaven the antichrist

will think that he's still ruling over the world, but he's wrong. The Lord Jesus Christ has assumed control and will put events into motion that result in the antichrist's defeat.

The Lord will appoint 7 angels to pour out 7 vials of God's wrath upon the Earth:

Revelation 15:1: “And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.”

The vials are:

The First Vial: painful sores. The first vial of wrath (or bowl, as they're sometimes called) will cause terrible, painful sores to appear on all those who took the Mark of the Beast:

Revelation 16:2: “And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshiped his image.”

No Christians will be affected, but all those who worshiped the Beast will be infected with this painful disease.

The Second Vial: all sea life dies. Earlier we saw a judgment where one-third of all aquatic life was killed. In the second vial God will wipe out the rest of it:

Revelation 16:3: “And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.”

At this point there will be no sea life left anywhere on Earth. All of the oceans will have become blood, and everything in them will be dead.

The Third Vial: all fresh water becomes blood. In an earlier judgment one-third of the world's freshwater supply was poisoned. In the third vial *all* of the world's freshwater supply will be turned to blood:

Revelation 16:4: “And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.”

The passage doesn't say that they became *as* blood, or that they looked like blood, or that they turned red. Instead it says they actually *became blood*. There's a specific reason for this:

Revelation 16:5-6: “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, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.”

Those who are left on the Earth have proven their bloodthirstiness by killing millions upon millions of Christians, so as punishment God has turned their entire water supply into blood. Since they desired the blood of His children, God has given them blood to drink.

But God still isn't done. This is only the third vial; there are still four more to come.

The Fourth Vial: scorching heat. In an earlier judgment we saw

that something blocked out one third of the world's sunlight. Here we see the reverse. Something will happen to the sun that will cause it to become far more active:

Revelation 16:8-9: “And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; 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.”

The sun will become much hotter and will scorch people with unbearable heat. In return they won't repent, but will instead blaspheme God with an even greater intensity.

The Fifth Vial: painful darkness. After mankind blasphemes God for sending scorching heat, He will send darkness over the kingdoms of the world which are controlled by the antichrist:

Revelation 16:10-11: “And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.”

This darkness will apparently be connected with intense physical suffering because there's mention of pains, sores, and people gnawing their tongues. Yet there will be no repentance. Instead people will simply hate God even more.

The Sixth Vial: the Euphrates river is dried up. This might seem strange after what just happened in all of the other vials, but

there's a reason for it:

Revelation 16:12-16: “And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. 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, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”

The Euphrates river is going to be dried up so that the battle of Armageddon can take place. The Lord will gather the whole world together for one great battle – a battle that Jesus will fight *in person*. When the armies of the world gather together to wipe out the Jews who have been hiding in the wilderness, they'll encounter something they didn't expect: the returned Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The Seventh Vial: the worst earthquake of all history. Earlier in Revelation we saw a devastating earthquake. That quake was nothing compared to this one:

Revelation 16:17-20: “And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the

throne, saying, It is done. 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. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.”

This earthquake will be so great that it will level all of the mountains, move every island out of its place, and destroy all the cities of the world. It will be the worst earthquake to ever happen in all of history! It's quite possible this will cause a staggering loss of life (although it's hard to say how many people are still alive at this point, given everything else that's already taken place).

There's more than just an earthquake, however:

Revelation 16:21: “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.”

The earthquake will be followed by a hailstorm that's so terrible that each stone will weigh around *seventy pounds*. Imagine giant boulders raining down from the sky, causing untold property damage (if there's any property left standing at this point!) and killing massive numbers of people.

Babylon is Destroyed: During the tribulation the antichrist will rule over the world from the rebuilt city of Babylon. For a time this city will wield tremendous power and wealth. However, at

the end of the tribulation the Lord will judge that city and bring it to ruin:

Revelation 14:8: “And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

This is talked about much more extensively in chapter 18, which says this:

Revelation 18:2-3: “And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”

Revelation 18:8-10: “Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. “

Revelation 18:17-24: “For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster,

and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”

There are several points that I want to emphasize. First, it's clear that at the time of the tribulation the city of Babylon will be a rich and important city. This passage tells us that she had “great riches” and her merchants “were the great men of the earth”. It also says that she deceived the nations. Today the modern city of Babylon is little more than a tourist attraction, but one day it will become the most important city of the world.

The other point I want to bring out is that the destruction of Babylon is complete and total. In a single hour the city will be

destroyed, burned to the ground, and become a place where only demons dwell. No one will ever live in it again and the city will never be rebuilt. One of the reasons it will be violently destroyed is because of the role it played in slaughtering millions of Christians. God will judge that wicked city and bring it to an end.

The Marriage of the Lamb: Toward the end of the tribulation the Marriage of the Lamb will take place. This is when the Bride of Christ (the church) will become the wife of Christ. We find this mentioned right after the city of Babylon is burned:

Revelation 19:7: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”

While the Earth is experiencing the wrath of God, a great Marriage is taking place in Heaven. Of course, in order for this wedding to take place the entire church must be in Heaven at the time! This is more evidence for a pre-tribulation Rapture.

The Second Coming: After the Marriage has taken place the Lord will return to Earth with the armies of Heaven:

Revelation 19:11-16: “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 with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white

horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 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: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

The antichrist will gather the nations together for the great battle of Armageddon (which is something we saw when the 6th vial was poured out). The antichrist is expecting to wipe out the last remnant of the Jews, but instead he will face the Lord Jesus Christ:

Revelation 19:19-21: “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 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. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

When the antichrist attacks Jesus, the Lord will single-handedly wipe out both him and his armies. The antichrist and false prophet will then be cast into the Lake of Fire. Although Jesus will have the armies of Heaven with Him, He won't use them. He will do all of the fighting Himself! His Word is enough to defeat them all.

After this happens the Lord will bind Satan for a thousand

years and the Millennial Kingdom will begin – which is a topic I've discussed elsewhere¹.

1 For more information, see: <http://stories.cyragon.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Millennial-Kingdom.pdf>