

2B. The Great Tribulation In The World (6-18)



- (6.1) 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.
1. We have established that the Lamb John refers to in Revelation is the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. This takes us back to John 1.29, where John the Baptist declared Jesus to be “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”
 2. “As he breaks the 7 seals that secure the scroll, each seal unleashes a new demonstration of God’s judgment on the earth in the future tribulation period. These seal judgments include all the judgments to the end. The seventh seal contains the 7 trumpets; the seventh trumpet contains the 7 bowls.”¹
 3. What might be the significance of the phrase “noise of thunder?” Undoubtedly, the beast did not have to yell to make himself heard by John. There must be a symbolic significance for the beast to have spoken that loudly just as the Lord Jesus broke open one of the seals.
 4. Exodus 9.22-25 and First Samuel 7.1-13 are typical examples that will show us how the Bible student should think of thunder as we study God’s Word:
 - a. Exodus 9.22-25:

¹ See footnote for Revelation 6.1, John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 2000.

- 22 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.
- 23 And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.
- 24 So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.
- 25 And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that *was* in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.

b. First Samuel 7.1-13:

- 1 And the men of Kirjathjearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD.
- 2 And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjathjearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.
- 3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.
- 4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only.
- 5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.
- 6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.
- 7 And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.
- 8 And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.
- 9 And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.

- 10 And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.
- 11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar.
- 12 Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.
- 13 So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

5. With the mindset of a Jewish person (or a Jewish Christian), which John and many of his first readers in the first century were, it is easy to understand how thunder would typically be associated with a divine judgment against the enemies of God's people. This association sounds logical since Revelation is a book that reveals God's future judgment of unsaved mankind.
6. What was John called to come and see? Remember, he saw the Lord Jesus break open the seal. So, the beast was not calling him with a loud and booming voice to see what he had already seen.

(6.2) 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.

1. "No explanation is given of this vision. In many cases the reader of Revelation is not left to his own ingenuity but is given the meaning of what is beheld. Here as in many other instances, however, the appeal is to a general knowledge of Scripture. In this instance, because there is no specific interpretation of the vision, more diverse explanations have been given of verse two than probably any other portion of the entire book."²
2. "And I saw, and behold a white horse"
 - a. This is what John was called to view. "The animal represents an unparalleled time of world peace - a false peace that is to be short-lived. This peace will be ushered in by a series of false messiahs, culminating with the Antichrist (Matt. 24:3-5)."³
 - b. The identity of this horse's rider is crucial for a proper understanding of Biblical prophecy and this book of the Bible. Remember that, chronologically, we are at the beginning of Daniel's 70th week, the seven-year period of tribulation,

² John Walvoord, *The Revelation Of Jesus Christ*, (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1966), page 126.

³ See footnote for Revelation 6.2, John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 2000.

which comes after the Rapture and before the Revelation of Christ to set up His millennial kingdom.

3. “and he that sat on him had a bow”

- a. Some think the rider of this white horse is the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe this rider cannot be the Lord Jesus. After all, why would John be called to come and see the Lord, Who he was at that time watching break the first seal? Yet, there is an even more formidable consideration.
- b. It is true that a white horse is symbolic, in God’s Word, of a victorious king, which the Lord Jesus will be when He returns to earth to set up His kingdom. But remember that there is also a rider of a white horse in Revelation 19.11. The rider in Revelation 19 is the Lord Jesus Christ. Could our glorious king also be referred to in Revelation 6.2?
- c. The Word of God supplies the answer. Psalm 45.4-6:
 - ⁴ And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness *and* righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.
 - ⁵ Thine arrows *are* sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies; *whereby* the people fall under thee.
 - ⁶ Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom *is* a right sceptre.
- d. Notice something different about the rider of Revelation 6 and the rider in Psalm 45. Maybe you have noticed a difference in equipment. The rider in Revelation 6.2 has no arrows. The rider of Revelation 6 is, to the point in time this passage deals with, a bloodless conqueror. That is important.

4. “and a crown was given unto him”

- a. This crown is a στέφανος, not a diadem. Remember that a στέφανος is a crown that is awarded for one reason or another, while a diadem, διάδημα, is a crown of royalty worn by a reigning monarch.⁴
- b. The Lord Jesus Christ wears diadems in Revelation 19.12.

5. “and he went forth conquering, and to conquer”

- a. Even though the rider in chapter 6 goes forth conquering and to conquer, he is *not* the Lord Jesus Christ. Who do you think he is? I am persuaded he is the antichrist. I believe he is the one who tries to imitate the Lord Jesus Christ in

⁴ Bauer, Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), pages 943-944 and page 227.

the eyes of the people and tries to usurp the place of the Lord in the hearts of one and all.

b. Rienecker comments: “Although some have felt that the rider on the white horse is Christ Himself (Zane Hodges, ‘The First Horseman of the Apocalypse,’ Bib Sac 119 [Oct. 1962], 324-334), it is better to view this one as the Antichrist, i.e., the ‘man of sin’ (s. Rissi, 407-418; s. also the discussion by Mounce; Walvoord, Ford).”⁵

6. “Is it really important who this rider is, pastor?” It is if it is crucial to determine whether or not God’s children will suffer and be persecuted before or after Christ’s visible return. If this rider is Christ, He cannot deliver His Own from famine, martyrdom, persecution, and oppression, as it happens under His nose. However, if this is the antichrist, all of the horrors occur *before* the Lord comes, and when He comes, He puts a stop to it once and for all. So, yes, it is essential who the rider is. It is important what you believe.

(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.

1. “And when he had opened the second seal”

Who is the person who opens the second seal? The same one opened the first seal, the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, He is the only one worthy to take the book and open the seals, according to Revelation 5.9.

2. “I heard the second beast say, Come and see.”

John is again invited to observe the events that unfold.

3. “And there went out another horse *that was* red”

a. What do you think the red horse stands for in the Bible? We can choose either sin or bloodshed, represented by the red horse. As I understand Scripture, this has happened to this point: For three and a half years, as we shall learn later, the antichrist will preside over a false peace on the earth. However, when this second seal is broken, the attempts to have peace without the presence and the rule of the Prince of Peace fail miserably.

b. “The White Horse symbolizes bloodless victories, the Red Horse speaks of slaughter and bloodshed.”⁶

⁵ Fritz Rienecker & Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, 1980), page 826.

⁶ L. Sale-Harrison, *The Remarkable Revelation*, (New York: Sale-Harrison Publications, 1930), page 79.

4. “and **power** was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another”
 - a. Peace on earth will end, and violent war and bloodshed will take its place. There will be tremendous bloodshed and an unbelievable loss of human life, but the war will not primarily be a war between countries. At least, that is not what is referred to here, even though the Lord said that nation shall rise against nation.
 - b. “...God gave him power to bring sorrow and distress upon man because of his sin. The wickedness of men has been so great that God allows a leader among them to carry out his judgment upon them.”⁷
5. “and there was given unto him a great sword”
 - a. The “great sword” mentioned here is the kind of sword that a Roman soldier would take into battle, a μάχαιρα. John is describing wholesale carnage for us.



- b. If you think carnage on a large scale does not happen, remember that similar horrors have occurred many times. Examine the massacre that took place following the French Revolution. Investigate the mass murders that took place when India gained its independence.
6. Think of how evil men will be, and how reckless will be their actions, when the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit has been withdrawn, which is one of the consequences of the Rapture, according to Second Thessalonians 2.6: “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.”

⁷ Ibid.

7. “If the first seal is a period of peace, as some have held, though this seems to be contradicted by the fact that the rider of the first horse conquers, in any case when the second seal is broken, military warfare breaks out and peace is taken from the world. The constant tension among nations and the ambitions of men have their climax in this period before Christ comes. Though ‘wars and rumours of wars’ (Matt. 24:6) are characteristic of the age, it is evident that warfare occupies a large place in the consummation of the age with a resultant great loss of life. There apparently is a series of wars, the greatest of which is under way at the time of the second coming. The hope of permanent peace by means of the United Nations and other human efforts is doomed to failure.”⁸

(6.5) 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.

1. “And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see.”
 - a. The third seal is opened by the same One Who opened the first two seals, the only one qualified to open the seals of this redemption scroll, the Lord Jesus Christ. Only He, to remind you once again, is the qualified kinsman-redeemer, who is near kin, able to redeem, and willing to redeem.
 - b. In Revelation 4.7, this third beast is described with these words: “the third beast had a face as a man.” This description has led some Reformed theologians to suggest that this third beast symbolizes “the ministers of the Gospel.”⁹ I disagree, seeing no reason this third beast cannot be who John says it is, one of the four living creatures surrounding the throne of God in heaven.
 - c. As before, John is invited by this third beast to “Come and see.”
2. “And I beheld, and lo a black horse”
 - a. What does black represent in God’s Word? What usually and logically follows war? What happened in Germany following World War I?
 - b. Following the ravaging of Jerusalem by Babylon, the prophet Jeremiah described the nightmarish scenes in Lamentations. In Lamentations 5.10, he wrote, “Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine.”
 - c. Then the Lord said, in Matthew 24.7, “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines....” By the way, the word “nation” translates to the Greek word ἔθνος. Does anyone know what

⁸ Walvoord, pages 128-129.

⁹ John Gill, *The Baptist Commentary Series Volume I, John Gill’s Exposition Of The Old And New Testaments, Vol 9* (Paris, Arkansas: the Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., reprinted 2006), page 721.

common term comes from that word? Ethnic. The Lord Jesus tells us, in this day when nations are increasingly comprised of multiple ethnic populations, that there will be ethnic warfare, warfare between kingdoms, and famines.

- d. If the black horse in this verse symbolizes famine, let us be clear that we understand what famine means. *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* defines famine as "extreme and general scarcity of food, as in a country or a large geographical area."¹⁰
- e. How far will people go to feed themselves when faced with starvation caused by food scarcity? Look with me to a verse in Lamentations, and then in passages that predicted what we read of in Lamentations:

Lamentations 4.10: "The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people."

Leviticus 26.29: "And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat."

Deuteronomy 28.53-57:

- ⁵³ And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the LORD thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee:
- ⁵⁴ So that the man *that is* tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave:
- ⁵⁵ So that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates.
- ⁵⁶ The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter,
- ⁵⁷ And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all *things* secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates.

3. "and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand"

- a. Who is sitting on the black horse in Revelation 6.5? I know of no speculation of the rider's identity, which sounds credible to me.

¹⁰ *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1996), page 696.

- b. The balances mentioned here confirm that there will be famine. During the great depression in Germany following World War I, everything sold was sold by weight. Loaves of bread sold for wheel barrels full of cash.
- c. Verse 6 confirms the tragic situation that will exist in the not-too-distant future.

(6.6) 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.

1. “And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say”

- a. Who speaks in this verse? Is this the voice of one of the beasts? I do not think so since the voice comes from the midst of the four beasts, who seem to be circled around the throne of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, Who has taken from the Father the redemption scroll whose seals are now being opened.
- b. John seems to be purposefully indistinct here, intentionally not clarifying whether the voice is the voice of God or the voice of the Son of God. My inclination, since this book of Revelation is the revelation of Jesus Christ, the unveiling of Jesus Christ, is to think that the Lord Jesus is the One Who is now speaking.
- c. What does He say?

2. “A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny”

- a. The word “penny” here is translated from the word “denarius.” That amount was the standard wage for one whole day’s work.¹¹
- b. A “measure,” approximately a quart by volume, was the approximate amount of what would satisfy one adult male’s nutritional needs. Do you see the significant problem here?¹²
- c. A man will work all day and have only enough money to feed himself if he eats wheat or just enough to feed himself, his wife, and one child if he eats barley. But, the average household has more than one child. And what about the elderly? So, you see that starvation on a massive scale is in store for the human race in the not-too-distant future.

3. “and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine”

¹¹ Walvoord, page 129.

¹² See marginal note for Revelation 6.6, John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 2000.

- a. The oil and wine are products that, historically, only the wealthy could afford to purchase and consume. Is it not interesting that the consumer goods customarily purchased by the wealthy will not be affected by the runaway inflation associated with the coming famine?
 - b. This suggests a runaway inflation that is manipulated by the wealthy classes. If you think it cannot happen, the prime interest rate was past 20% during the administration of President Carter, the 39th president of the United States, from 1977 to 1981, which is approaching the Latin American type of inflation.¹³
 - c. I am no economist. However, while an undergraduate at Oregon State University, I enrolled in an economics class taught by a professor who informed the class that virtually every known economist in America was forecasting runaway inflation in the USA sometime in the future. They do not publish these expectations outside their professional journals, he said, for fear of creating a panic that would end in a self-fulfilling prophecy.
 - d. They also point out, I was told, that there has, historically, been only one way of bringing a halt to this kind of wild inflation once it began; WAR! Either a civil war so that you can start the economy over from scratch or a war against another nation.
4. Bible prophecy is as current as tomorrow's paper. When the Rapture occurs, and the Church Age believers are removed from the scene by the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit in His ministry of restraining sin, a false Christ will come on the stage and establish a false peace. When the false peace falls apart, there will be a war this world has never seen. The carnage will be unbelievable. In addition, after the war will come mass starvation of such severity that the imagination staggers at contemplating it.
- (6.7) And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.
1. The Lord Jesus Christ opens the fourth seal, and John is summoned to "Come and see" yet another horseman.
 2. This fourth summons comes from the beast that "**was like a flying eagle**," according to Revelation 4.7. What is the significance of this description?
 3. The *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary* makes this statement about the fourth beast: "The fourth living creature, who was 'like a flying eagle,' introduces this seal; implying high-soaring intelligence, and judgment descending from on high fatally on the ungodly, as the king of birds on his prey."¹⁴

¹³ <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2021/11/16/latin-americas-inflation-challenge>

¹⁴ *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, Vol 3, Part Three*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997), page 678.

(6.8) 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.

1. “And I looked, and behold a pale horse”

- a. This is the last of the four horsemen of the apocalypse. He is riding upon a “pale” horse.
- b. This word “pale” translates the Greek word *χλωρός*, from which I suspect our words “chlorine” and “Clorox” are derived. The word refers to the color of a corpse or a person whose color has been blanched by terror.
- c. The footnote on this verse in *The MacArthur Study Bible* reads: “‘Pale,’ the Gr. word from which ‘chlorophyll’ comes, describes the pale, ashen-green, pallor characteristic of the decomposition of a corpse.”¹⁵

2. “and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.”

- a. The rider is named Death, and Hell followed with him. Death is the keeper of our physical bodies, and Hell is the keeper of lost men’s souls ... for a time.
- b. This is the first time a rider of one of these four horses is named. What are we to conclude from this? Is Death a person to be named? No. We see a type of symbolism called personification, wherein a personal nature is attributed to an inanimate object or an abstract notion.¹⁶
- c. These four horses are not literal, and neither Death nor Hell possesses any personality characteristics. These are literary devices that have been employed for effect. The horses are symbols of war. Death and Hell, though impersonal in fact, are personalized in Revelation to impress upon the reader that they are our enemies.

3. “And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth”

- a. Notice that “power,” literally authority, *ἐξουσία*, was given unto them, unto these two, Death and Hell. Where does the “power” they are given come from?
- b. Hearken back to Matthew 28.18, where the Lord Jesus Christ said, “All power (*ἐξουσία*) is given unto me in heaven and earth.” It comes from the same Jesus Who is opening the seals of this book.

¹⁵ See footnote for Revelation 6.8, John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 2000.

¹⁶ *Webster’s*, page 1446.

- c. What is the result of this authority being given to Death and Hell? One-fourth of the human race will die by various means. And by what means will so many people die? Read on.
4. “to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.”
 - a. William R. Newell comments on this verse: “But under the fourth seal we see death and Hades given authority over the fourth part of the earth to kill; and that with God’s four sore judgments of Ezekiel 14:21, ‘sword,’ ‘famine,’ ‘pestilence’ and ‘wild beasts.’ People say, ‘Peace,’ but the sword is coming. People cry, ‘Prosperity and plenty,’ but famine is coming. People boast of conquering disease by medical science, but pestilence is coming. Hunters complain of the disappearance of beasts to hunt, of game to pursue; but wild beasts will (by and by) multiply again, even in America, to the slaying of thousands upon thousands! We must remember that a fourth of the population of the earth is given over to these four judgments alone. And let us also remember that the plagues hurled directly from heaven, as in chapter 16, have not yet begun, under the four seals, not even the locust plague of chapter 9, nor the career of the wild beast of chapter 13. These come later. But the sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts, take a quarter of earth’s population.”¹⁷
 - b. The thrust of what this fourth seal represents is carnage on a scale unprecedented in human history, except for the Flood.
 5. Upon opening the fourth seal, the way is now open to destroy one-fourth of the human race. Think about that. If Jesus comes for us today, when the population on this planet is more than 8 billion, then power will be given for these horsemen to slay more than 2 billion men, women, and children. That is more people than were slain when God brought the Flood during Noah’s time.
 6. This is only the beginning of such carnage as the human race has never seen or imagined. In addition, the greater tragedy is that even those unsaved people who escape this beginning of horrors will face more. Even if they evade these horrors and somehow survive the horrors that we will soon read about, the lake of fire still awaits all who survive to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
- (6.9) 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
1. There are several thoughts provoked by this verse. First, notice that no one summons John to “Come and see” as when the previous four seals were opened. Second, with the opening of this seal, the scene shifts from earth to heaven.

¹⁷ William R. Newell, *The Book Of The Revelation*, (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1935), page 106.

2. There are two resurrections referred to in the Bible. By resurrections, I am not referring to anyone raised from the dead in a normal physical body, such as when Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus¹⁸ or Lazarus.¹⁹ Both Jairus' daughter and Lazarus subsequently died natural deaths a second time because theirs was not a resurrection to eternal life. Let us limit our focus to the resurrection that prepares for eternity.
3. In Revelation 20.6, we read, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."
4. All the saints, whether they are Old or New Testament believers, take part in the first resurrection, while the damned take part in what is referred to as the second resurrection, at which time they will stand before Christ on the occasion of the White Throne judgment, after which they will be cast in the lake of fire, which is the Second Death.
5. Back to the first resurrection. First Corinthians chapter 15 is the definitive chapter on the first resurrection in the Bible. The first resurrection, the resurrection of the saved, occurs in three stages. *First*, there was the resurrection of Christ to a glorified body (the beginning of the Church Age). *Next*, the Rapture occurs in which the Church Age saints are resurrected to glorified bodies. *Third*, after the seven-year tribulation between the Rapture and the Revelation (It must be pointed out that the first resurrection includes the Tribulation Period saints), Old Testament and Tribulation Period saints are resurrected at the time of Christ's Second Coming.
6. In verse 9, John sees not the saints under the altar but "the souls of them slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held" under the altar. The phrasing of John might indicate that those he sees under the altar have not yet received glorified bodies but are the saints of the Tribulation Period awaiting their resurrection and glorified bodies. This would fit into the pre-tribulation Rapture understanding of God's Word.
7. Another observation at this point is that being under the altar is "in keeping with the fact that the blood of the sacrifices of the Old Testament was poured out under the altar (Exodus 29:12; Lev. 4:7)."²⁰ But which altar is referred to here since there are two altars, the altar of sacrifice and the altar of incense? This is "Probably a reference to the altar of incense, which pictured the saint's prayers ascending to God (5:8; cf. Ex. 40:5)."²¹

(6.10) 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?

¹⁸ Luke 8.51-56

¹⁹ John 11.32-44

²⁰ Walvoord, page 133.

²¹ See footnote for Revelation 6.9, John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 2001.

1. Before proceeding, please note that this second of eight total times in Revelation, we find the phrase “them that dwell on the earth.” Of course, this is a technical phrase used by John to describe those who are unconverted. For the saved, this old earth is as bad as it will ever get. But for you who are lost, this world is as good as it will ever get for you, because after this earth, there will be only God’s wrath awaiting you.
2. In this verse, we also have additional evidence that points to tribulation saints, specifically Jewish believers, who will have been martyred. Several things to notice about the events in heaven, keeping in mind that there is carnage taking place on earth, with half the population of the earth being slain as we approach the midpoint of the Tribulation Period:
3. First, notice that they are crying out for vengeance. In your Bible study, have you seen that godly Old Testament saints cried out to God to pour His wrath on their enemies and avenge them? In contrast, Church Age saints are instructed to pray for those who spitefully use us, to turn the other cheek to those who smite us, and to endure persecution meekly.
4. Truly, has God instructed His saints to act and react differently under different dispensations, as a reflection of various aspects of His nature is emphasized in the different dispensations. In either era, spirituality is determined by adherence to the revealed will of God, whatever that will might be. For a Christian during this era in which we live, the principle is found in Romans 12.19: “Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”
5. Let me give you another reason for believing these are unresurrected Tribulation saints crying out to the Lord Jesus Christ. They are crying out for Christ to judge and seek vengeance against people still alive! That they are crying out for revenge suggests that they are not Church Age saints, and that their enemies are still alive indicates that they are not Old Testament saints. These must be Tribulation-age saints! In addition, none of this information would fit into any system of prophecy besides the pre-tribulation pre-millennial system.

(6.11) 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.

1. Some perplexing statements are made in this verse.
2. First, what about those white robes? I do not really have a problem with white robes, which are given to believers to wear and represent Christ’s righteousness. But how do you wear robes when you do not have a body? These souls do not have a physical body because their dead physical bodies are back on the earth and either rotting or incinerated. They do not yet have glorified bodies. The alternative proposed by some Bible scholars is that when someone dies and goes to heaven, God

gives them a temporary habitation for the soul to dwell in until the resurrection occurs in which they receive their glorified body, in which they dwell for all eternity—something to ponder, but not a weighty matter.

3. Second, these souls were told to wait. Wait until other believers are killed. You see, even when things go entirely against you, and you think everything happening is wrong, it is actually correct. There will be multiplied thousands of Christ's Own killed for Him during the tribulation. Does that disturb Him? Is that a surprise to Him? It certainly shakes up His followers until He calms them down. But remember, Christ is still on the throne. These horrible things are happening to God's children because these things are supposed to happen. It is all a part of God's plan, you see.
4. But, then, that such apparent tragedies are part of God's plan is much easier to see when it is happening to others than when it is happening to you. Amen?

- (6.12-17) ¹² 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;
¹³ 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.
¹⁴ And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.
¹⁵ 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;
¹⁶ 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:
¹⁷ For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Note: This passage closes out the sixth chapter of John's Revelation and begins John's observations on two different planes. First, in verses 12-14, John records what happens in the realm of the physical universe, whether in space or on the earth. Then, in verses 15-17, he records the reactions of lost mankind on earth. Let us look at these different phenomena individually.

1. Verse 12: "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal..."
 - a. At this point, the scroll is almost opened, for there are only seven seals. One more to go after the opening of this seal. Something to mention before proceeding. In the Greek language of the New Testament, two common words can be translated "I saw" or "I beheld," as we have seen since John's translation to heaven in Revelation 4.1. *Βλέπω* tends toward the more physical aspect of our idea of seeing or observing. However, the word *εἶδον*, which we have seen exclusively since Revelation 4.1, when John writes, "I saw" or "I beheld," refers more to perceiving something, with less emphasis on the actual physical use of the eyes. This is understandable because John's experiences in heaven are not physical experiences. Remember, John is "in the Spirit" according to Revelation 4.3.

- b. “The force described in this seal is overpowering fear (cf. Luke 21:26). While the first 5 seals will result from human activity God used to accomplish His purposes, at this point He begins direct intervention (cf. Matt. 24:29; Luke 21:25). The previous 5 seals will be precursors to the full fury of the Day of the Lord which will begin with the sixth seal (v. 17). The events described in this seal unleash the seventh, which contains the trumpet judgments (chaps. 8,9; 11:15ff.) and the bowl judgments (chap. 16).”²²
2. “... and lo, there was a great earthquake;...”
 - a. Some Bible expositors do not believe that a literal earthquake is being referred to in this verse. Harry Ironsides, for example, believed that John was referring to the breakup of the political and governmental system in power at this time.
 - b. But ask yourself two questions: First, is there a compelling reason for believing that John is not using literal and normal language here? If not, we should seek no forced or strained sense in understanding John’s prophetic record. Second, of those Biblical prophecies which have been fulfilled to date, were they fulfilled literally or symbolically? An honest and thorough Bible student would readily admit that prophecies are fulfilled literally. The answers to these two questions lead me to conclude that a genuine earthquake is referred to here, as are the other physical occurrences genuine.
 - c. “There have been many earthquakes prior to this (Matt. 24:7), but this will be more than an earthquake. All the earth’s faults will begin to fracture simultaneously, resulting in a cataclysmic, global earthquake.”²³
 - d. If these earthquakes are actual, what is their significance? What do they mean? What message is communicated by this catastrophe? First, Jeremiah 10.10-16:
 - ¹⁰ But the LORD *is* the true God, he *is* the living God, and an everlasting king; at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.
 - ¹¹ Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, *even* they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.
 - ¹² He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.
 - ¹³ When he uttereth his voice, *there is* a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.

²² See footnote for Revelation 6.12, John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 2001.

²³ *Ibid.*

- 14 Every man is brutish in *his* knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image *is* falsehood, and *there is* no breath in them.
- 15 They *are* vanity, *and* the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.
- 16 The portion of Jacob *is* not like them: for he *is* the former of all *things*; and Israel *is* the rod of his inheritance: The LORD of hosts *is* his name.

Now to Matthew 24.3-8:

- 3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?
- 4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.
- 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.
- 6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.
- 7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.
- 8 All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

These and other verses associate massive earthquakes with the judgment of God. But note the association of earthquakes with the judgment of God is an association that applies during the tribulation only. In other words, these signs come into play only after the Rapture and the beginning of the 70th week of Daniel, the seven years of Great Tribulation.

3. "... and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;..."
 - a. "Accompanying the earthquake will be numerous volcanic eruptions; and large amounts of ash and debris will be blown into the earth's atmosphere, blackening the sun and giving the moon a blood-red hue (cf Zech. 14:6,7)."²⁴
 - b. In the Old Testament book of Joel, there are pertinent verses in chapter 2:
 - 1 Blow ye 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 cometh, for *it is* nigh at hand;
 - 2 A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people

²⁴ Ibid.

and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, *even* to the years of many generations.

- ¹⁰ The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:
- ¹¹ And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for *he is* strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; and who can abide it?
- ³⁰ And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.
- ³¹ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Several things can be observed at this point in our study:

c. Acts 2.16-20:

- ¹⁶ But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;
- ¹⁷ And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:
- ¹⁸ And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:
- ¹⁹ And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:
- ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:

Many Christians believe Joel's prophecy was fulfilled on Pentecost when Simon Peter referred to it. Others are convinced Joel's prophecy was partially fulfilled. However, neither opinion is born out by carefully considering the actual prediction.

- d. When Simon Peter stood and referred to Joel's prophecy on the Day of Pentecost, he was not indicating that Joel's prophecy was being fulfilled, either in whole or in part. Instead, he pointed out that the sound of a mighty rushing wind, the cloven tongues of fire, and the gift of tongues had a distinct parallel to Joel's prophecy. What was the similarity? The outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- e. This can be seen by carefully examining Joel's prophecy and the book of Revelation. Joel's prophecy will be fulfilled when the Day of the Lord, or the Day of Jehovah, begins. This is very clear from the verses in Joel we just read. Did

the Day of Jehovah begin on the Day of Pentecost, or will it commence at the beginning of Daniel's 70th week, after the Rapture?

- f. Consider the two possibilities. In the Word of God, does a day begin with light or darkness? The Day of Jehovah, will it begin with the dawn of a new day, or will it start as darkness, with the light of day coming later? The latter is the case in God's Word.
 - g. Look at it another way. On the Day of Pentecost, was the sun darkened? Did the moon become as blood? No. Why did those things not happen? Because the Day of Jehovah, the Day of the Lord, did *not* begin with Pentecost. That is why. The Day of Jehovah will start with the darkness of great Tribulation, following the Rapture.
 - h. Peter referred to Joel's prophecy, not to indicate that it was being fulfilled, but to indicate that the Holy Spirit's ministry at the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy would be significant. Hence, the Holy Spirit's ministry on the Day of Pentecost was responsible for the signs and wonders those Jewish men observed and heard. For any other understanding to be accurate, you must abandon your commitment to a literal interpretation of Biblical prophecy. This is absurd because all prophecies that have been fulfilled have been literally fulfilled.
4. Verse 13: "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."
- a. "Oh, pastor. Surely, you do not think that an actual star can fall to the earth. Why, our sun is a star and is much larger than our whole planet."
 - b. Oh? Have you ever measured the diameter of a star? Are you sure and positive that the twinkling lights in the midnight sky are giant fireballs larger than our sun?
 - c. "But pastor, scientists have made measurements of the size of these stars. And it is quite certain that they are enormous."
 - d. I am convinced that the Bible is to be trusted for its accuracy and its reliability more than the measurements of any scientist whose professional reputation is at stake.
 - e. If the Word of God says stars will fall to the earth, I will assume that several things are true: First, I will think that our planet is large enough for the stars to fall onto it. Second, I will assume the stars are small enough to fall onto it. Finally, I will think that science is wrong and that the Word of God is correct whenever there is disagreement. Is my position clear?

- f. Besides, “The word ‘stars’ can refer to any celestial body, large or small, and is not limited to normal English usage. The best explanation is a massive asteroid or meteor shower.”²⁵
5. Verse 14 begins: “And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together;...”
- a. What does Isaiah have to say about this phrase? First, we look to Isaiah 13.6-14:
- 6 Howl ye; for the day of the LORD *is* at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.
- 7 Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt:
- 8 And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces *shall be as flames*.
- 9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.
- 10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.
- 11 And I will punish the world for *their* evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.
- 12 I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.
- 13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.
- 14 And it shall be as the chased roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up: they shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land.

Now we look to Isaiah 34.4:

- 4 And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling *fig* from the fig tree.
- b. It seems to me as that Isaiah agrees with the literal coming down of the stars (here described as “their host”) and the rolling up of the heaven. Would you not agree?

²⁵ See footnote for Revelation 6.13, John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 2001.

- c. Consider a hologram. A hologram is a way of producing an image on a flat surface with three-dimensional characteristics. As you change your location, what you see gives the impression that what you are looking at is a solid, when it is on a flat plane.
 - d. Might that explain the heavens being rolled up like a scroll? Would it not be mind-boggling to get to heaven and discover that God used some physical phenomena that produced a holographic effect in creating His universe? And that this holographic effect caused astronomers and cosmologists to draw innumerable conclusions about the physical universe that are just plain wrong?
 - e. I am not a scientist. I am certainly not a cosmologist. I only know that every single time science has advanced, we have been shown that what primitive science thought was impossible according to the Bible, advanced science has shown that what was declared in the Bible was true. Here, as in other difficult-to-understand passages in God's Word, I will stick with the Bible over any seeming impossibilities that contemporary science cannot explain.
6. Continuing with the second half of verse 14: "... and every mountain and island were moved out of their places."
- a. This is not at all hard to imagine. Geologists have known for years about the several tectonic plates that account for continental drift on the earth's crust. It is the sudden shifting of portions of these tectonic plates, which bear up against each other, which account for earthquakes and tsunamis, or what used to be called tidal waves.
 - b. John sees that this drift of tectonic plates will occur rapidly in the future, instead of as slowly as it does now.
7. To step back and reconsider momentarily, some people try to explain verses 12-14 as symbolism. However, I do not believe they are symbolic. Symbols are used, in Scripture, to explain things that cannot otherwise be understood. But there is no problem understanding what John is dealing with here. Thus, John had no reason to express what he saw using symbolic language.
8. In Luke 21.25-26, the Lord Jesus Christ predicted the things that John writes of here, and there is no indication that symbolism was being used. Read those two verses:
- ²⁵ And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;
 - ²⁶ Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

These are not symbols. These events will happen, and they will happen just as the Bible says they will happen.

9. Moving along, we see that in verses 15-17, John records the reactions of those who must endure the great calamity we have just read about:

¹⁵ 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;

¹⁶ 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:

¹⁷ For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

What do we see?

- a. First, we see that God is no respecter of persons. From John's account of future events, we see that everyone will be afraid, from the highest stations of life to the lowest, from kings of the earth to bondmen, from the great and mighty and chief men to the free men. No one will escape the catastrophes of that day. That means you will not escape those catastrophes if you are unconverted during the Rapture.
- b. Next, we see just how the depraved act. What will the depraved do? They run from God. They are hiding in the dens and the rocks of the mountains. Except for the fact that there were no dens and mountain caves hide in, this is exactly what Adam and Eve attempted in the Garden of Eden.
- c. Lost folks always, and Christians, far too frequently, run from the One Who can help them. These people desire that mountains and rocks fall on them, in the vain hope that they can escape facing the Lord Jesus Christ.
10. Finally, notice in verse 16 and verse 17 the character of the time in which these folks live. Verse 16 refers to this period, the Tribulation period, as "the wrath of the Lamb." In addition, in verse 17, it is called "the great day of His wrath."
- a. Pause with me for a second. This period will be a time of the outpouring of the Lord Jesus Christ's wrath. Is that not correct? "The sixth seal will commence what the prophets call 'the Day of the Lord.'"²⁶ This prophetic day will begin with great wrath.
- b. But what does Romans 5.9 and First Thessalonians 5.9 say about wrath? Romans 5.9 reads, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." First Thessalonians 5.9 reads, "For

²⁶ See footnote for Revelation 6.17, John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 2001.

God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- c. Unless my logic is faulty, for these two verses to be actual, and for the seven years of Tribulation to be a time of poured-out wrath, as we see here in Revelation chapter 6, Christians cannot be on the earth during that period because Jesus saves us from wrath.
 - d. It is a good thing Christians will not be here during that period. To you want to know why? Read the last phrase of verse 17 again: “... who shall be able to stand?”
 - e. What a question that is. “Who shall be able to stand?” No one. It is beautiful to know that I will not have to stand because I will be in heaven. Can you say the same?
11. “The book of Revelation discredits those who hold that God is so loving and kind that He will never judge people who have not received His Son. Though the modern mind is reluctant to accept the fact that God will judge the wicked, the Bible clearly teaches that He will. The Scriptures reveal a God of love as clearly as they reveal a God of wrath who will deal with those who spurn the grace proffered in the Lord Jesus Christ. The passage before us is a solemn word that there is inevitable judgment ahead for those who will not receive Christ by faith.

The close of chapter 6 of the book of Revelation advances the narrative to a new high in the progress of the book. In some sense chapter 6 is the outline of the important facts of the period of great tribulation, and the rest of the events of the book of Revelation are comprehended in the seventh seal introduced in chapter 8. Chapter 6 closes with a pointed question: “Who shall be able to stand?” The answer is obvious: Only those who avail themselves of the grace of God, even though they suffer a martyr’s death in this future tragic period. This is brought out in the next chapter. The given revelation emphasizes the importance of partaking of the grace of God in this present age with the bright prospect of the Lord coming for His own.”²⁷

²⁷ Walvoord, page 138.