

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SEALS OF REVELATION, LOOKING AT A POST TRIBULATION/PRE MILLENNIAL RAPTURE

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The Book of Revelation provides a feast of important information about the future. It is a book that brings all sorts of images to mind. Seals, Golden Lampstands, Stars, even the very throne of our great God. It is a fascinating book full of vivid imagery. Can we possibly know the meaning of the book? The simple answer is yes. The very meaning of Revelation is “Revealing”! If we think back to the images of Daniel, Daniel was told to “Seal up the Book until the time of the end.” Well I firmly believe that we have reached that time.

What I wish to focus on is not so much a complete overview of the book, but something very specific in regard to a widely held belief that many have today. This belief is known as “The Pre Tribulation Rapture.” The belief started back in the early 1700’s but became more prominent in the 1800’s when John Nelson Darby accepted the theory as fact. This initiated the Brethren movement which is so prominent today. Really it wasn’t until recently that this theory has become a major force in current theology. *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey and the *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye have resulted in an explosion of Pre Tribulation Rapture thinking. But is it true? Let’s begin examining the sequence of events unfolded before our eyes in the Book of Revelation as well as in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24 to gain a further understanding of when these events take place.

To open our scene John is “*in the Spirit*” and has been taken to the very throne of God in heaven. He sees “*a Lamb, looking as it had been slain*” as the only person found worthy to open the seals on the scroll. As Jesus takes the scroll and begins to open the seals, we have an amazing sequence of events unfold before our eyes. As the Lamb (Jesus) opens the first seal we see the first rider that have become know as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, “***I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.***” (*Revelation 6:2 NASB*) Here we have a picture of a rider on a white horse. MANY people believe that this is Christ returning. We need to give this ample thought. Is this Christ? Is this our Savior coming? We need only to turn to Revelation 19 and read verses 11-16 to get our answer. Yes Christ is coming on a white horse but this is where the similarities end. Christ is coming with MANY crowns, a sharp two edged sword along with many other things. Who is this rider of the first seal then? We must go to the book of Matthew and read Jesus’ own words regarding the subject. What I find fascinating is the fact that when the seals of Revelation are compared with Jesus’ own words in Matthew 24 we find a perfect fit and a greater explanation of the seals themselves. As we see in Matthew 24:4-5 Jesus explains perfectly the first rider of Revelation. “***And Jesus answered and said to them, 'See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.'***” (*Matthew 24:4-5 NASB*) We see by Jesus’ own words this rider is none other than false religion. This rider is riding rampant today, I think, as many of you see.

This brings us to the 2nd seal of Revelation and the rider on the red horse. Throughout all of history has there been any greater reason for war than religion? This second of the four horsemen is to “*take peace from the earth*”. This second rider is none other than the red horse of war. Now I ask you to turn back to Matthew 24 and notice the sequence. Let’s continue in *Matthew 24:6*- “***You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.***” What does Jesus say follows false religion? War. The similarities between Matthew 24 and the seals of Revelation are striking to say the least.

As we continue reading from Revelation 6 and Matthew 24 we see that the third and fourth seal are perfectly aligned in both books as well. As we see the third seal open we see a rider on a black horse representing Famine. What naturally is left in the wake of war — famine. Notice Jesus’ words in *Matthew 24:7*- “***For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.***” The same is true for the fourth seal which is

the pale horse of disease and death. We have a natural course here: false religion leads to wars, wars lead to famine and the lack of nutrition leads to disease and death.

Now we turn our attention to the fifth seal. Let's read the opening of the fifth seal from **Revelation 6:9-11**- ***"When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'" And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.***" What do we have pictured here with the opening of the 5th seal? The martyrdom of the saints or the beginning of the Great Tribulation. The Great Tribulation begins with the Anti Christ declaring himself to be God in the Temple. This is the Abomination that causes Desolation. When we see this happen, we know the 3 ½ year Tribulation period has begun. I find it amazing that when this happens people at large seem to accept it. Only recently have I really thought on the subject. To most of the world "God" has already come once in the form of Jesus, so why would they be surprised when the Anti Christ claims to be God? I must interject here the symbolism given to us. It pictures the *"souls of those who had been slain crying out"*. "Souls of" is a very Hebrew phrase for "those persons who" — nothing to do with immortal souls. Can the souls that are asleep in Christ "cry out"? No, this is figurative language here. Did the blood of Abel literally cry out to God? Of course not. It is picturing an injustice that has been done. Now let's go to the unmistakable parallel in **Matthew 24:9,21**- ***"Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name."*** ***"For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will."*** The opening of the fifth seal of Revelation brings us to the worst time of trouble in the history of mankind. A time that Jesus said no flesh would be saved if he didn't return first. I ask you now, you have seen from Matthew 24 and Revelation 6 the sequence of events so far, what has not occurred yet? The answer, Christ still has not returned.

This brings us to the 6th seal. When this seal opens, we see these events greatly intensify. **Revelation 6:12-14** gives us the picture when the 6th seal is broken, ***"I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places."*** The very same language is used in **Matthew 24:29** which is the **key** verse for our argument, ***"But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken."*** The opening of the 6th seal brings an end to the Great Tribulation. The 6th seal represents the heavenly signs that will occur prior to Christ's return. Jesus says very plainly immediately **after** the tribulation of those days. We will have to go through Tribulation! Will it be a terrible time for us? Yes it will. Will God give us the strength to endure? You bet He will, if we are faithful. Some may have to forfeit their very lives. But I ask you, which is worse, forfeiting your life for Christ or taking the mark of the Beast and forfeiting your eternal life? God will give us the strength to endure, even to the point of death. Again I ask you, what has not happened yet?

We have now set the stage for the 7th and final seal to be opened. The 7th seal as we see, encompasses several things. There are seven trumpets that are sound and seven bowls of God's wrath that will be poured out. The 7th seal is where the tables are turned. Up until this time the saints of God have been the recipient of persecution from the Great Tribulation. Now it is God's turn. He has seen enough. The stage is set for the seven angels with their trumpets to sound. As the first six trumpets sound we see terrible plagues being poured out on the earth. These plagues vary from the fresh and salt waters stricken to the earth and heavens being stricken. These trumpets sound one right after the other. Now I ask you, will we, even though we will still be on this earth, be affected

by these plagues? That answer quite simply is no. This is the beginning of the wrath of God. God is angry, not at us, but at the world at large. But how could we be protected from these things, you might ask. I ask you, were the Israelites affected by the plagues sent to the Egyptians? No, they were not. God will protect those that are His at this time.

The first six trumpets have sounded. And the 7th angel with the 7th trumpet prepares to sound. The blast from this trumpet will be sweet music to our ears because it announces the event that each and every one of us long for — the return of Christ! Read with me in *Revelation 11:15*- ***‘Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”*** Is this not the time that each of us long for? The time when our Lord and Savior returns to this earth to set up God’s Kingdom forever? Absolutely!! The dead in Christ will rise first and those of us still alive will be changed to immortal! The bowl of God’s wrath that the 7th angel also announces will have no effect on us! We will be immortal! The very next scene is found in *Zechariah 14:4*- ***“In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.”*** In that day the very same Jesus who deserves our praise and glory as Messiah, will stand on the Mount of Olives and the age to come will then begin. Jesus of course represents Yahweh as his agent.

Now, seeing the sequence of events unfolded before us, we can now gain a full understanding of the supposed “Pre Tribulation Rapture” scriptures. First let’s look at *1 Thessalonians 4*, the number one scripture used by Pre Tribulation Rapture folks. We will begin reading in *vs. 13-17*- ***“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”*** We see here that Christ’s return will be announced by a trumpet call in verse 16. But which trumpet are we speaking of? We simply need to turn to 1 Corinthians 15, the resurrection chapter, to receive our answer. *1 Corinthians 15:50-52*- ***“Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”*** Paul here goes into further detail. He tells us Christ will return at the **last** trumpet. Which trumpet is the last trumpet, I ask you? It is none other than the 7th trumpet of Revelation 11.

As you see there is no “secret” rapture spelled out at all in the scriptures. There is no “fly-by” done by Christ in secret. There is ONE Lord, ONE Messiah and ONE return of that Messiah, the Son of the Living God, Jesus the Christ. May each of us be found worthy to escape all these things foretold and in the end to stand before the Son of Man. Come, Lord Jesus.