

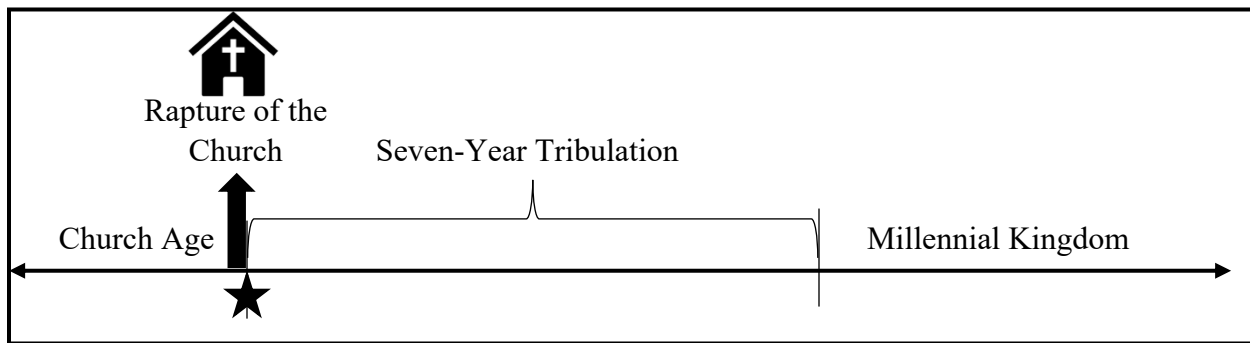


## Eschatology – A Study of the End Times

### Lesson 14: The Seven Year Tribulation Period

#### Introduction

In our study so far, we have begun considering the future seven-year tribulation period. Last time we considered the beginning of tribulation period following the rapture of the church. We considered two themes, the rebuilding of the temple and the signs of the tribulation. In this lesson, we will consider the Lord's sovereignty over the tribulation as He initiates the seal judgments, and the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, who will proclaim the message of salvation to the lost.



#### The \_\_\_\_\_ Who is Worthy<sup>1</sup>

In a vision in Revelation 4, John is invited to a heavenly scene, where God, the Father, is on His heavenly throne. As the vision continues, John is presented with a marvelous setting around God, the Father, who is at the center, and chapter four ends with worship directed at God by four living creatures and the twenty-four elders (Rev. 4:8–11).

In Revelation 5, the scene transitions from the worship of God as He sits on His throne to a search for the worthy One. John is a witness, and he sees a scroll in the right hand of Him, who sits on the throne, written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals (Rev. 5:1). This scroll that John saw was the title deed to the earth as Christ is going to take back what He owns and make all things right.

<sup>1</sup> The following is adapted from *The End Times in Chronological Order* by Ron Rhodes.

As this scroll is revealed, it appears initially that there is no one qualified to open it, and John begins to weep (Rev. 5:1–4). However, the apostle John continues and reveals to us that there is in fact One who is worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, which brings an end to John’s weeping. The One who is worthy is identified as the Lion of Judah, the Root of David, who is also the Lamb of God. This is the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 5:5–6). With the revelation of the Lamb, He comes and takes the scroll from the One who sat on the throne. The result of this act of taking the scroll leads all the creatures to fall down in worship for the Lamb (Rev. 5:7–14).

The events described in these two chapters anticipate the future judgements that will follow. The important point to understand is that it is Jesus Christ who will initiate the devastating judgments that will break forth during the seven-year tribulation period.

### **The \_\_\_\_\_ Judgments**

With Christ taking the title deed to the earth from God, the Father, we begin to see His sovereign hand in unleashing the judgment upon the earth to take back the earth.

The first set of judgments to be unleashed upon the earth are the seal judgments. As each one is unsealed, judgment ensues.

1. First Seal Judgment (Rev. 6:1–2) – This seal describes Antichrist’s false peace, which happens at the beginning of the tribulation period. He will seek to imitate Christ trying to bring about peace. But all he brings is false peace.
2. Second Seal Judgment (Rev. 6:3–4) – The opening of the second seal brings about war upon the earth.
3. Third Seal Judgment (Rev. 6:5–6) – The opening of the third seal brings about famine in the land.
4. Fourth Seal Judgment (Rev. 6:7–8) – The opening of the fourth seal brings about death to one fourth of the world’s population.
5. Fifth Seal Judgment (Rev. 6:9–11) – With the opening of the fifth seal, we see the souls of the tribulation saints crying out to God for divine justice. These were those who were martyred for their faith in Christ. But God promises them justice.
6. Sixth Seal Judgment (Rev. 6:12–17) – With the breaking of this seal, there is a devastating earthquake along with cosmic signs. People’s response will be that of fear and panic, where they will scream out, “Hide us from the wrath of God.”
7. Seventh Seal Judgment (Rev. 8:1–2) – With the breaking of this seal, it commences a new series of judgments called the trumpet judgments (Rev. 8:1–13; 11:15–19) which are more catastrophic.

### **The \_\_\_\_\_ Evangelists**

In the midst of such devastating judgment that is going to come from the Lion of Judah, the Lord Jesus Christ, the question that may come to mind is that “will there be any who stand?” In fact, this is what is asked by the people of the earth after the sixth seal is opened by Christ, and the people face His wrath (Rev. 6:17). Following this statement, Revelation 7 forms a parenthetical section between the sixth and seventh seals to answer that very question.

In chapter 7, there are two groups that experience God's saving work. First, there is the 144,000 Jewish missionaries who will be saved and commissioned by God during the tribulation period. They will be commissioned by God to preach the gospel across the globe during those difficult seven years.

There are those who say that this does not represent Israel. Rather, they take it metaphorically to represent the church. However, based on what we have already covered in our study of eschatology as well as the immediate context, it is best not to interpret it as the church. In terms of what we have covered in our study, the church has already been raptured to be with the Lord. So, this cannot represent the church on earth.

In terms of the immediate context, verse 4 indicates that these are those who were sealed, identified as the 144,000. The 144,000 are the sons of Israel. This clearly cannot be the church. Rather, these are Jewish men who are sealed. These consists of 12,000 men from every tribe of Israel who will be living during the tribulation period (Rev. 7:1-8).

The second group we find in chapter 7 is the salvation of those who will be saved through the ministry of the 144,000 Jewish missionaries. There will be countless conversions. A great multitude will be saved, and they will be from across the globe, from "every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues" (Rev 7:9-10). Though they have died and are in heaven, worshiping God, these are those who have eternal life in Christ Jesus. Even in the midst of probably the darkest time in history, there will be light. God will be saving His people because not only is He the Judge, He is also the Savior.

### **Application**

1. God will bring His judgment and make all things right in the end. Hope is only found in Him.
2. Even in the midst of great darkness, our God is still working out His sovereign plan and saving sinners. Praise God for His saving grace.