



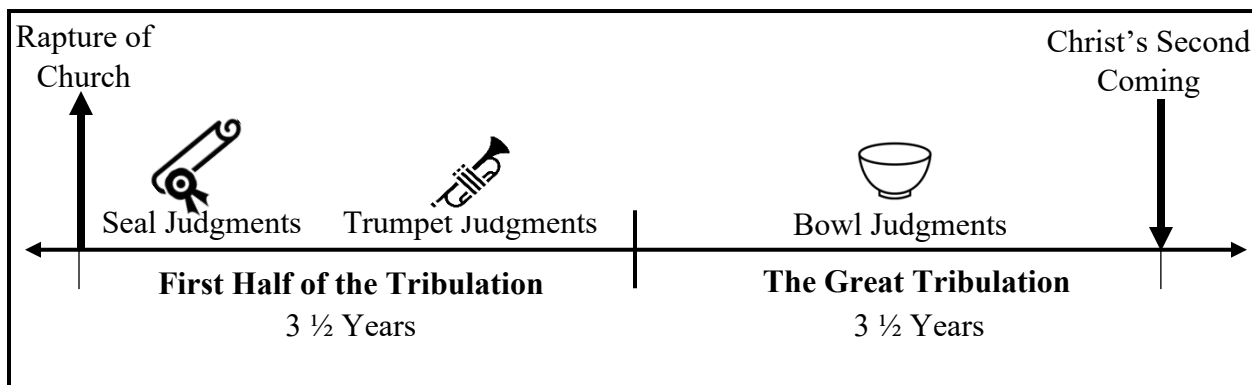
## Eschatology – A Study of the End Times

### Lesson 15: The Seven Year Tribulation Period, Part 2

#### Introduction

In our current study of eschatology, we are considering the future seven-year tribulation period. Last time we saw 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 in the first half of the tribulation. In this lesson, we will look at the trumpet judgments and the two witnesses in the first half of the tribulation.

#### Timeline of Tribulation Judgments



The seven-year tribulation period can be divided into two three- and one-half year periods. These periods are sometimes called “the tribulation” and “the great tribulation.” The chart above shows the timeline of the judgments during the seven-year tribulation period. While there are differing views on where the judgments fit into the seven-year period, we align more with the chart above.

#### The Trumpet Judgments

After the first six seal judgments are opened, the seventh seal judgment contains the trumpet judgments (Rev. 8:1–2). A trumpet was used in the ancient world to signal to people a special announcement or some major event that was about to take place. The seven trumpet judgments are major events that are found in Revelation 8, 9, and 11:15–19. All the judgments are administered by special angels that move from heaven to earth showing that these judgments

have their origin with God, not with nature. Many of the trumpet judgments focus on nature and contain two of the three woe judgments (Rev. 9:12; 11:14).

1. First Trumpet Judgment (Rev. 8:7). The first judgment is hail and fire mixed with blood that is thrown down to the earth. This results in a third of the earth being burned up, a third of the trees being burned up, and all the green grass being burned up. Many have seen the parallel between this judgment and Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19) and the sixth plague in Egypt (Exod. 9:22-26).
2. Second Trumpet Judgment (Rev. 8:8-9). When the second trumpet is sounded and something like a great mountain burning with fire (possibly a giant meteorite or asteroid) is thrown into the sea. The result of this is that a third of the sea becomes blood, a third of the creatures in the sea die, and a third of the ships in the sea are destroyed. This is most likely due to tsunamis that would capsize many ships. This will bring about a disruption in commerce and transportation and will impact the world's economy. This judgment has parallels with the first plague in Egypt (Exod. 7:14-25).
3. Third Trumpet Judgment (Rev. 8:10-11). When this judgment sounds forth, it will produce a great star (possibly a comet or meteor) falling from heaven that is burning like a torch. This great star, called Wormwood, will infect a third of the rivers and freshwater springs on the earth. Wormwood is associated with bitterness, poison, and death. Due to the bitter (poisonous) water that results from this star, many men will die.
4. Fourth Trumpet Judgment (Rev. 8:12). At the sound of the fourth trumpet, a third of the sun, moon, and stars will be struck. This will cause less heat on the earth and greater darkness. The lack of heat will only be temporary as God will later increase the heat from the sun and scorch men (Rev. 16:8-9). The darkness of this judgment parallels the ninth plague in Egypt (Exod. 10:21-23).
5. Fifth Trumpet Judgment (Rev. 9:1-12). When the fifth trumpet sounds, a star will fall from heaven to the earth. This star is an angelic being who is fallen to the earth, which is most likely Satan—the leader of all the fallen angels. He will be given the key to the bottomless pit which will unleash demons that resemble locusts. These demonic creatures are permitted to torture unbelievers who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads for five months. Those who are tortured will desire death but will be prevented from dying. This fifth trumpet is the first woe (Rev. 9:12).
6. Sixth Trumpet Judgment (Rev. 9:13-21). At the sound of the sixth trumpet, four angels will be released. These four angels are actually demons who have been bound and kept by God for this exact moment in time. Since death was on pause for five months (see 9:5), death now returns with vengeance. These four demons are released to kill a third of mankind. They also command a host of 200 million demons that help them to accomplish this task. They kill a third of mankind by fire, smoke, and brimstone. By this time, at least half of the earth's population will have died in only a few years. However, those who are alive will not repent of their demonic worship and wickedness. The sixth trumpet is the second woe (Rev. 11:14).
7. Seventh Trumpet Judgment (Rev. 11:15-19). The seventh trumpet will initiate a new set of judgments called bowl judgments. These are worse than the trumpet judgments and will be unleashed in the great tribulation.

## The Angel and the Little Book

After the sixth trumpet in Revelation 9:13–21, there is an interlude in chapters 10 where John sees an angel with a little book in his hand. Just as chapter 7 stood between the sixth and seventh seal judgments, chapter 10 is placed between the sixth and seventh trumpet judgments and sets the stage for that final trumpet, which initiates the seven bowl judgments.

In chapter 10, John hears seven peals of thunder that utter their voices. When John hears these seven peals of thunder, he was about to write down what he heard, but he was forbidden to do so. We might wonder what John heard, but “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).

John then heard an angel speak of the seventh angel who was about to sound. This seventh angel would bring the seventh trumpet judgment which is the seven bowl judgments (Rev. 16:1 – 21) that will bring God’s judgment to an end.

John was then told by the voice who forbade him from writing to go and eat the book in the angel’s hand. John obeys the instructions and eats the book. This book was sweet (like honey) in his mouth but quickly became bitter in his stomach. This symbolism illustrates how God’s Word is sweet to believers because it promises that God will take back what is rightfully His and be exalted and glorified. However, it is bitter because it includes warnings and judgments that will come upon unbelievers before that happens.

## The Two Witnesses

In Revelation 11, John is told about two mighty witnesses whom God will raise up during the tribulation period. These two witnesses will testify to the truth and perform many great miracles. While there are differing viewpoints on when these two witnesses appear—either at the beginning of the tribulation or at the midpoint of the tribulation—we view them as appearing at the beginning of the tribulation. The following are reasons for the first half of the tribulation:

1. It is the *beast* who is destroyed at the end of the week, not the witnesses.
2. It is more natural to understand the overthrow of the two witnesses as leading to the defilement of the Temple to follow (the Abomination of Desolation). Prior to their overthrow, they are invincible and almost certainly would not allow the beast to sit in the Holy Place to declare himself as God (2 Thess. 2:4).
3. The Jews will flee to protection from the Antichrist at the midpoint of the tribulation. Why would the two *Jewish* witnesses, who are key in the revival of the Jews during the tribulation, be found in Jerusalem *after* the Jews have fled to protection?
4. How could the Antichrist overcome the witnesses at the *end* of the great tribulation and the world throw a big celebration at the very time the Antichrist is heavily involved with the Campaign of Armageddon and Christ’s arrival?

5. The overthrow of the prophets would more naturally contribute to the rise and fame of the beast.
6. If Christ returns with the resurrected saints to the earth at the end of the seven-year tribulation period, why do these two resurrected witnesses ascend to heaven?<sup>1</sup>
7. After the great earthquake of Revelation 11:13 where only 7,000 die (compare Rev. 16:18–21), John then tells us the second woe is past (Rev. 11:14) and the third woe is coming quickly. This would seem that the third woe, which is the seven bowls, is still to come after the two witnesses are taken back up to heaven.

The ministry of the two witnesses lasts for 1,260 days or the first three- and one-half years. When the witnesses arrive on the scene, they are clothed in sackcloth. Sackcloth represents mourning, grief, and repentance. When prophets wore sackcloth, it indicated their own brokenness over the message of doom and judgment that they were delivering. In this sense, the sackcloth of the two witnesses is analogous to the bitterness of the book that John consumed (Rev. 10:10). Although these two men preach repentance, unbelievers won't want to hear their message and will become tired of their preaching and want them dead. After 1,260 days of these two witnesses preaching, the beast (Antichrist) will overcome them and kill them (Rev. 11:7). The death of these gospel preachers will cause a worldwide celebration which shows the depravity of men at that time and their complete rejection of the gospel message. These men will not get a proper burial but will be watched by the entire world for three and a half days as they lie dead in the streets of Jerusalem.

After being dead for three and a half days, God will resurrect these men back to life. This will cause fear to come upon all those who have been watching these men. Then they will be called back up to heaven in a cloud as the world watches on. Soon after they are gone, there will be a great earthquake that will destroy a tenth of Jerusalem and kill 7,000 people (most likely prominent people associated with the Antichrist). This will cause some people (probably Jews) in Jerusalem to repent and be saved as indicated by the fact that they "gave glory to the God of heaven" (Rev. 11:13). However, with the two witnesses now gone, judgment is going to get a lot worse.

Who are the two witnesses? There has been a lot of speculation as to the identity of these two men. The short answer is, we don't know for certain and cannot be dogmatic about their identity. However, there are several reasons to suggest that these men are Moses and Elijah. First, they will have the ability to perform miracles. Being able to destroy their enemies with fire from their mouth, stop rain, turning water into blood, and striking the earth with plagues are similar judgments seen in the Old Testament by Moses and Elijah. Elijah called fire down from heaven (2 Kings 1:10, 12) and pronounced a three-and-a-half-year drought on the land (1 Kings 17:1). Moses turned the water of the Nile into blood (Exod. 7:17–21) and announced other plagues on Egypt (Exod. 7–11).

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<sup>1</sup> Reasons 1-6 are taken from <https://www.preceptaustin.org/revelation-11-commentary>, accessed 2/6/2025.

Second, both the Old Testament and Jewish tradition expected Moses and Elijah to return in the future. Malachi 4:5 predicted the return of Elijah. Although John the Baptist is identified as fulfilling this prophecy in Matthew 11, because the Jews rejected Jesus, John did not fulfill that prophecy. John came “in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17).

Third, Moses and Elijah, possibly representing the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament, appeared with Christ at the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:3). The Mount of Transfiguration was a preview of the Second Coming of Christ. Fourth, both Moses and Elijah left the earth in unusual ways. Elijah never died but was taken to heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:11–12). Although Moses died in the land of Moab, he was supernaturally buried by God in a secret location (Duet. 34:6; Jude 9).

Again, since John does not give the identity of these two witnesses in Revelation 11, the above is speculation and is not a dogmatic statement. One day the world will know with certainty who these two witnesses are. For now, we must be content not knowing with certainty.

### **Application**

1. Understand that God is a righteous judge. He hates sin and will bring judgment upon sinners. Call sinners to repentance (like the two witnesses) so that they may escape the judgment of God.
2. Desire God’s Word. It is sweet like honey and more desirable than gold (Ps. 19:10).
3. Trust God in times of trouble. In a world that often seems out of control, trust God that He will intervene, overcome evil, and bring deliverance to His people.