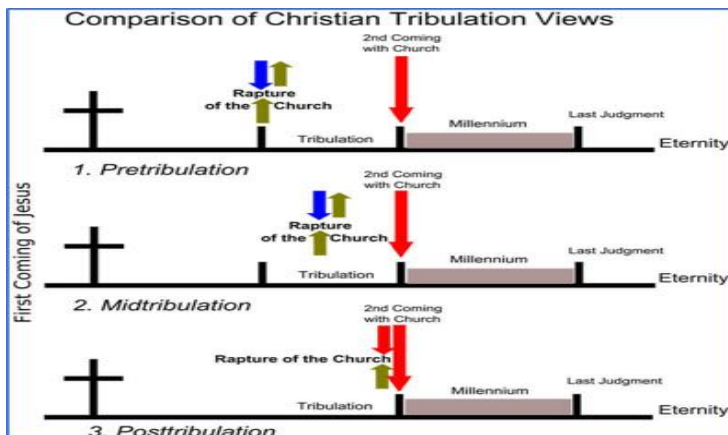


The greatest spiritual growth in my life came when I suffered the most. In the midst of my suffering, there seemed to be no relief. I would cry out to the Lord when I felt like He no longer heard my cries. But in time, I realized that it was in those harsh and horrible times that He was gently carrying me to where He wanted me to be. He didn't create those times, but He allowed them to happen, and He used them for my spiritual growth and His glory. This morning, we'll look at the great tribulation that will come upon the earth. At the end, we will see that it was meant to bring humankind to repentance. God desires for us each to enjoy a loving personal relationship with Him. He created us. He desires communion with us. Unfortunately, many do not respond, but instead decide to stay mired in their own sin, self, idolatry, and rebellion. During the most intense days of the Tribulation, humans will be faced with the ultimate decision of whether to come into a sweet relationship with the God who made them, or whether to remain in rebellion, corruption, and perversion. Most will refuse Him to the bitter end.

The Rapture



Before I start this morning, I want to remind the group that there is an event coming when Christ will remove His Church from the world. The events about which we are reading are not meant to scare us or bring us stress or dismay. One of the people who receives these sermons by mail keeps calling me each week saying, "I don't like these stories." Well, let me remind

you that these are not stories. These events will come to pass as sure as the sun will set today. I don't like them either and neither should you. It reassured her when I reminded her that, "We won't be here if we are walking with Him." We will be gone. God doesn't bring judgment on His own. It is my sincere biblical belief that we will not be here when these things happen. We most assuredly will see signs of what is coming, but I don't believe we will be here. There are several different viewpoints on when this event we call the Rapture will take place. Actually, there are three main viewpoints on the timing of the rapture with respect to the Tribulation. We refer to these viewpoints as "Pre-Trib," "Mid-Trib," and "Post-Trib." Those viewpoints focus on whether the Rapture is coming before, halfway through, or at the end of the Tribulation. Throughout this study of Revelation, I've explained that the purpose of this Tribulation event isn't just judgment, but it is a call for repentance and restoration with God to every human on planet earth.

The belief that Jesus is coming again is part of Christian orthodoxy. The earliest Christians recited the Apostle's Creed in which they said, "He shall come again to judge the living and the dead." I also want to add that there is **not one verse to answer** which of these three viewpoints of the timing of the rapture is correct. If there were, there wouldn't be these differing views. I have become convinced of my pre-tribulation rapture viewpoint from years of Bible study and through the teachings of Dr. David Jeremiah. So many pieces of rational thought come together to make the mosaic of a Pre-Trib viewpoint seem biblically plausible to me. We should remember that none of these viewpoints will get you to heaven or keep you out of heaven.

7 Seals – 7 Trumpets – 7 Bowls



In Revelation, we see three periods, or three descriptions of events revealed as: **7 Seals – 7 Trumpets – 7 Bowls**. I'm not sure if these events are happening successively or simultaneously. With logic, I suppose I fall more under the successive chain of events approach rather than a simultaneous occurrence. I looked at much of what has been written and it gets so crazy and complicated that I don't think anyone knows for sure, and I don't think

it really matters. The main point to be garnered is that **IT WILL BE WORSE ON THE EARTH THAN IT'S EVER BEEN, AND, STILL, SOME PEOPLES' HEARTS WILL BE SO HARDENED THAT THEY WON'T ACCEPT THE GOD WHO MADE THEM, KNOWS THEM, AND LOVES THEM.**

We have already read about the opening of the 7 seals. No one was found worthy to open it until the Lamb that was slain came forward and opened the seals. We have studied six of those seals. Now we see the last seal, the seventh seal, opened. There is a period of silence, and the seventh seal reveals seven trumpets that are to be sounded. That seems to pretty much convey the thought that a whole lot of bad (the four horsemen) has occurred when a pause happens that is the calm before the storm. When the last of the 7 seals is opened, there are seven trumpets revealed in the last seal. The following list describes in a word or two what happens as these trumpets are blown. Like a Matryoshka Russian doll, these trumpets are seven trumpets nestled inside of the seventh seal, and in the seventh trumpet, we will see that there will be seven bowls of wrath poured out in Chapter 16.

Sounding of the Trumpets (Chapters 8 and 9)

- 1) Vegetation struck.
- 2) Seas struck.

- 3) Fresh Waters struck and “embittered” becoming undrinkable.
- 4) Heavens were affected, and light of the sun and moon compromised.
- 5) Horrible Locusts – perhaps demonic beings reaping destruction.
- 6) Four Bad Angels with 200 hundred million horsemen – more demons led by Satan himself.

PAUSE - [Chapter 10: angel with a book that John eats and the two witnesses.]

7) Chapter 11 is the 7th Trumpet (containing the “Seven Bowls of Wrath”).



Seventh Seal: Prelude to the Seven Trumpets

8 When He opened the seventh seal, there was **silence in heaven** for about half an

hour. ² And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given **seven trumpets**. ³ Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much **incense**, that he should offer it with the **prayers of all the saints** upon the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴ And the **smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints**, ascended before God from the angel’s hand. ⁵ Then the angel took the **censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth**. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. ⁶ So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. (Revelation 8:1-6, NKJV).

Time references are so we as humans can have some understanding of what we’re reading. What we find here is a pregnant pause. This is the calm before the storm.



The trumpets referred to here may be the Shofarot that were used for many reasons in Israel. It was used as a **call to war** (Numbers 10:1-10), and it was used as a **proclamation of freedom** (Leviticus 25:9). Likewise, the trumpets could also be like the brass Roman trumpets



with which John and we are familiar.

There were 7 angels before the throne, and an 8th angel takes the censer and throws it on the earth. During this entire time of judgment, the first thing that happens is that the smoke of the incense, the prayers of the saints, are brought before God. All of these prayers mingled with fire are cast upon the earth. THESE PRAYERS FOR JUSTICE ARE NOW GOING TO BE ANSWERED. Think of all the prayers of the faithful as they have

undergone persecution. God is going to answer each and every one of those prayers. **These are prayers for justice, and justice is coming.**

Commentators say that the blowing of the seven trumpets is at the mid-point of the Tribulation.

First Trumpet: Vegetation Struck

*⁷ The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, **mingled with blood**, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up. (Revelation 8:7, NKJV).*

Hail, fire, and blood are thrown to the earth. A third of the trees and grass will be burned up on the earth. This could be like a giant meteor hitting or a huge solar flare. It will bring much death because of the "blood" that is mentioned. This could be multiple volcanos or one huge volcano blowing up on the earth. As vegetation is destroyed, food will become even more scarce than the prior scarcity ushered in by the black horseman of the apocalypse.

Second Trumpet: The Seas Struck

*⁸ Then the second angel sounded: And something **like a great mountain burning with fire** was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. ⁹ And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. (Revelation 8:8-9, NKJV).*

This appears to be a huge burning meteor or some other heavenly body landing in the ocean. It could even be a description of a thermo-nuclear war. Whatever it is, it will poison the salt waters and kill a third of everything in the seas. It will destroy 1/3 of the ocean-going vessels on the earth.

Third Trumpet: The Waters Struck

*¹⁰ Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, **burning like a torch**, and it fell on a **third of the rivers and on the springs of water**. ¹¹ The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter. (Revelation 8:10-11, NKJV).*



The Chernobyl Disaster - WorldAtlas

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This sounds like an asteroid destroying the fresh water on the earth. Or the described "star" could be a glowing nuclear bomb. The star is named "wormwood" literally meaning "bitter." One of the effects of radiation is that it makes the victim taste things as being "bitter." One of the greatest man-made nuclear disasters was the meltdown of the Soviet nuclear reactor in Chernobyl, Ukraine. Chernobyl is a

Ukrainian word closely related to the herb called "wormwood" in English. The failure of the power plant in Chernobyl was an environmental disaster that contaminated the fresh water in that area, and it altered much of the groundwater in Northern Europe.¹ When the third trumpet sounds the event will contaminate 1/3 of the fresh waters of the earth.

Fourth Trumpet: The Heavens Struck

¹² Then the fourth angel sounded: And a **third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars**, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.¹³ And I looked, and I heard an angel [Greek: aetou=eagle] flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "**Woe, woe, woe** to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" (Revelation 8:12-13, NKJV).



Now the light given off by the celestial bodies is affected. Something will darken a third of the sun, the moon, and the stars. I don't know if this means that they are covered in clouds or what, but a third of their light will be diminished. This effect is much like we talked about when we discussed the eruption of Mt. Tambora in 1816. Just last week, smoke from wildfires in Canada plunged New York City into darkness for several days (see photo to left – June of 2023). Things will go dark.

Jesus said this was going to happen big-time when He discussed the end of times in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. ²⁹ "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven,

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chernobyl_groundwater_contamination

and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." (Matthew 24:29, NKJV). The earth's temperature will drop and again the crops will be affected.

Now the judgments change from physical aspects to those of a spiritual nature.

Chapter 9 - Fifth Trumpet: The Locusts from the Bottomless Pit

9 Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a **star fallen from heaven** to the earth. To him was given the **key to the bottomless pit**. ² And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. ³ Then out of the **smoke locusts came upon the earth**. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. ⁴ They **were commanded not to harm** the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only **those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads**. (Revelation 9:1-4, NKJV).

The "star" fallen from heaven is no doubt Lucifer, Satan, the Devil. In Isaiah 14:12, the prophet Isaiah refers to Satan as the "morning star" (compare this with Jesus who is the "Bright and Morning Star." Satan is the one with the keys to the "Abyss." These locusts referred to are demonic. They are beings coming from the abyss. They are let loose on the earth to torment, but only the unbelievers were allowed to be tortured here. So, the 144,000 that are sealed along with all the other believers on the earth at that time will be protected from the demonic attacks.

⁵ And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them **for five months**. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. ⁶ In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they **will desire to die, and death will flee from them**. (Revelation 9:5-6, NKJV).

The torment will go on for five months. Something will be out creating so much misery that the afflicted will want to escape it by death, and they'll not be able to die.



⁷ The shape of the locusts was **like horses prepared for battle**. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were **like the faces** of men. ⁸ They had hair **like women's hair**, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. ⁹ And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was **like the sound of chariots** with many horses running into battle. ¹⁰ They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails.

Their power was to hurt men five months. ¹¹ And they **had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit**, whose name in Hebrew is **Abaddon**, but in Greek he has the name **Apollyon**. [Both אַבְדֹן Ἀπολλύων mean destruction and destroyer.] (Revelation 9:7-11, NKJV).

The imagery used seems to me to be nothing short of a teeming mass of demons. They will descend in a hoard upon the earth to destroy and kill. Satan himself will be the leader of the band.

¹² One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things. (Revelation 9:12, NKJV).

Sixth Trumpet: The Angels from the Euphrates

¹³ Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, ¹⁴ saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the **four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates**." ¹⁵ So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, **were released to kill a third** of mankind. ¹⁶ Now the number of the **army of the horsemen was two hundred million**; I heard the number of them. ¹⁷ And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. ¹⁸ By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. ¹⁹ For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm. (Revelation 9:13-19, NKJV).



These four "angels" (fallen angels meaning demons) will be released from the Euphrates. Query whether the current unprecedented drying up of the Euphrates is part of what will allow the release of these four mentioned demons. In any event, they will release a fury upon the earth.

²⁰ But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, **did not repent of the works of their hands**, that they should not **worship demons**, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. ²¹ And they **did not repent** of their murders or **their sorceries** or their **sexual immorality** or their **thefts**. (Revelation 9:20-21, NKJV).

This tells us that these plagues have been generated to bring about repentance. But STILL unbelievers do not repent.

The Day of the Lord – As Discussed by Peter

⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,** ¹² **looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God,** because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:9-13, NKJV).

I want to end this sermon by saying God is not willing that any should perish. Repentance and salvation are available to all on the earth. Part of what we just read is indeed God avenging the death of his faithful saints throughout history. NO ONE NEEDS TO EXPERIENCE ANY OF THIS. God gives every human being a chance to be reconciled to Him and to walk in fellowship with Him.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.