

The Terrors of the Tribulation

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

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Our study tonight takes us to the beginning of the time known in the Bible as the tribulation. I would say that it goes without saying and yet just for reemphasis to state it anyway, that man is living in a crisis time. I don't think in my life in the years of my maturity, brief though they are, that I have ever sensed such a turmoil and such a negative expectancy in the world, as is apparent today. The world appears to be in many ways at a crisis like no other time. I read in Newsweek Magazine, this week's edition, August 6, 1973, a very interesting article reviewing a particular book written by a man by the name of Professor Canard Lorenz. Professor Lorenz belongs to West Germany's Max Planck Institute for Behavioral Physiology, and in this particular book, which he writes, which is a doomsday book, he gives the eight deadly sins that are leading men to premature extinction. And in a kind of doomsday summary he recites these eight things that are going to doom mankind.

One, over population. And he says he's not afraid we're going to run out of food, but he believes man is innately aggressive. What will happen is we'll get so many people that men will turn loose an uncontrolled kind of aggression and he bases his particular emphasis on studies of rats, which in overcrowded situations turn to aggression. He feels, however, while rats always leave a small core of survivors to begin again the cycle, humans won't have that much sense and they'll obliterate themselves in total.

The second problem that he sees is the problem of pollution and he says we have already reached the point of no return. The third problem that he states is the problem of uncontrolled growth. There are no limits on industrialization, there are no limits on production, there are no limits on spending, there are no limits really on inflation and he sees this uncontrolled kind of growth as only the forebodings of a terrible kind of collapse.

The fourth thing that he names is the numbing of consciousness. He says the quest through technology and pharmacology for a world without efforts and a world without pain has proven the means of dulling man's sensitivity and man wants everything painless and everything effortless to the place where there is no longer the capacity for joy, there is no longer the capacity for enthusiasm, and there is very little satisfaction in any kind of achievement. And he says man will die of boredom.

Fifthly he says the next deadly sin dooming man is genetic decay. He believes that we ought to be careful how we match up people to produce the kind of people who are smart, who are intelligent, who are able to lead. And it's interesting when you begin to study this problem that there has been

out a ringing cry around the world for cessation of birth and the birth control thing. We must stop producing babies and we hear about zero population growth in America. The interesting thing is that doctors are telling us that it is the intelligent people who understand the problem who have stopped having the babies.

In America today the doctor that delivered our little girl last week told me that according to the latest studies over 50% of the population of the United States has a moron or lower I.Q. and these people are continuing to have babies at just a rapid rate as ever they did and Lorenz sees that as genetic decay.

Sixthly he says the doom of man is spelled by the break down of tradition. He says the failure of children to identify with their families and the abandonment of traditional is going to destroy man. Seventhly he says susceptibility to indoctrination is another part of the doomsday cycle. He says our minds are no longer free. We are being manipulated. We are manipulated through the media; we are manipulated through all kinds of advertising, through television, through opinion polls, through the news that we hear, which is carefully screened on television and on radio, through all kinds of management. And he says, "The type of well-meaning young person who so readily accepts Marxist's is exactly the same type who accepted the Nazi's.

Eighthly and lastly in the cycle of doom he says nuclear weapons are foreboding. The testing of them polluting the atmosphere, the continual build up is going to find someday a release. And so he spells out the doom of man.

Now as a behavioral physiologist and as something of an ecologist, and something of a 20th century doomsday prophet he is telling the world that if things don't change absolutely and drastically that man is going to be doomed. Well, you know, I believe the very same thing, but I don't believe it for any of those eight reasons, particularly. I believe that man is going to be doomed to a terrible kind of judgment because that's what the Bible promises.

But it's interesting to find out that the prophets who know nothing about the Bible are predicting the very same things. The Bible spells out the doom of the human race very clearly. It spells it out in terms of a time known as the tribulation. This is the biblical time. And the tribulation, and you need to mark this in your minds. The tribulation is not simply the apex of natural consequences. The tribulation is the active wrath of God brought to pass in the world. It is not merely the cycle of man's natural violation of laws coming to an end; it is God actively intervening in judgment. And God is going to judge this world and He's going to judge it for sin.

Now we have been studying a little about the rapture of the church and we have learned that the Lord is going to take the church out, that all those who know and love Jesus Christ are going to be removed and then when we have been removed then begins the tribulation. Now if you're hung up on

the pre-tribulation rapture we've been all through that. At this point we're stating that as a fact. The church is removed; then begins this terrible time of judgment.

Now I want to share with you just three basic thoughts about the tribulation and this is strictly an overview and it's very simple, but I hope it will help you to put some things in perspective. First of all the period: What period does this tribulation occupy and to begin with we must turn to Daniel Chapter 9. Daniel 9:24, this is a review of some weeks back. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city." Now here God states that there will be seventy sevens of the history of Israel, seventy periods of seven and we determined that those were seven years. So there would be 490 years of Israel's history, seventy times seven and all that followed would occur.

Now if you go over to verse 25 you'll find that the prophecy is, "Understand from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah, the Prince, shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks." Sixty-nine of those seventy weeks would take up the time from the decree to build Jerusalem to the coming of Messiah. We studied in great detail this prophecy and we saw that, indeed sixty-nine weeks exactly from the decree of Artaxerxes to the arrival of Jesus Christ.

Now if God prophesized seventy periods of seven years and only sixty-nine periods of seven years have passed then one period of seven years remains and that is considered in verse 27. "He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week." In the future of Israel's history there is yet a seven year time period. "And in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease." Now during the seven year tribulation Israel is going to have its temple and Israel is going to be worshipping in its temple, but in the middle of that week the temple is going to be desecrated and violated and abominated as it says in the verse. So there's a seven-year period yet to occur in the history of Israel. Notice it says in the middle of the week, in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice to cease.

Now the tribulation is seven years in time but it is divided in the middle. And the middle is obviously three and a half years. So whenever we talk about the period of the tribulation we are talking about a seven-year period, but we are talking about a seven-year period divided into two equal halves. The first part we may call tribulation, the second part we call great tribulation. In Revelation Chapter 7 and don't need to turn to it because we'll be looking at Daniel for just a moment, but in Revelation 7:14, I think it is, "And I said unto him, 'Sir, knowest.' And he said to me, 'These are they who came out of the great tribulation.'" The seven-year period is called tribulation, but the last three and a half is called great tribulation. That's when everything really goes full scale.

The first three and a half years is a time of relative peace. The second half is not. As long as you're in Daniel look at Daniel 7:25, and here is a description of the last half, the last three and a half years, and it's speaking of the antichrist, the beast, the willful king, whatever term you choose. And verse 25, incidentally this antichrist is the world ruler during the tribulation and we'll get to him in some

weeks to come. Verse 25, "He shall speak great words against the most High." Antichrist is going to be against God, obviously, and he's going to wear out the saints of the Most High. He's going to chase and execute believers and he's going to think to change the times and the laws, very powerful. "And they shall be given into his hand." In other words he's going to be given the right to run rampant across the world, watch, "until a time and times and the dividing of the time." Now a time is one, times is two. The dividing of a time would be a half. One, plus two, plus is a half is what? Good class. Three and a half. So, antichrist is going to have dominance for a period of three and a half years, a time, times and the dividing of a time.

Now over again in Revelation you have a similar statement, but in Revelation Chapter 12 here we find an interesting situation. This whole chapter is so exciting. But there's a great big battle that finally ensues, but the idea here is three main characters. The woman is Israel. The child is Christ and the dragon is obviously Satan. Well Satan has been the prince of the power of the air and he's been roaming around heaven and he's had access to God where he accuses the brothers night and day and so forth and Satan's had pretty well his reign in the atmosphere about the earth. But he's going to get in a war with Michael and he's going to be a loser, verse 7. The dragon and his demons are going to fight Michael and his angels and Michael's going to win and verse 9 says you're going to cast Satan into the earth and all of his demons.

And this is really what begins the terrible terror of the tribulation when all of the demons and Satan himself are thrown out of heaven and their total domain is the earth. And one of the things that they're going to do is chase the woman and the woman is Israel that brought forth the child, Christ. And Satan is really going to get on it, verse 12. He's going to get active. The middle of the verse, "The devils come down unto you having great wrath because he knows that he has but a what? A short time. So when he gets here he's really going to move. "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth he persecuted the woman who brought forth the male child." He begins to persecute Israel. And so the woman was given two wings of a great eagle. This is some kind of a Jewish airlift. I don't know how they're going to do it, but apparently that's what it is, and she's going to fly into the wilderness into her place.

God has a special place for Israel. And Israel's going to fly to her place and, watch, she will be nourished for what? A time and times and half a time. And there again you have the same indication that the great tribulation will occupy a period of three and a half years. That is designated as the period of time.

Now in the middle of the seven years I feel that the thing that begins the last half is going to be this desecration of the temple that Daniel talked about. In the midst of the week they're going to desecrate the temple. You say what is that desecration? Well they're going to have a temple during the tribulation, Israel will, and during the first part they're allowed to, they have a covenant right? With antichrist, he confirmed a covenant for a week and he lets them have peace and he lets them

worship, but in the middle of that week he violates the temple and to them it's a very sacred thing. And apparently how he violates it is indicated in Revelation 13:14, "He deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles, which he had power to do in the sight of the beast, saying to them that dwell on the earth that they should make an image to the beast." Go down to verse 15, "He hath power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast would be killed."

Now apparently what is going to happen is antichrist is going to set up an idol to himself in the temple and that is the desecration of the temple and when that happens Israel begins to be persecuted and Israel flees as it said in Chapter 12 to her place. And God is going to have a special time where they are going to be tucked away. Go back to Chapter 12:6, "And the woman fled into the wilderness where she hath a place prepared by God that they should feed her there a thousand and three score days." You know how many that is? Three and a half years. So, antichrist in the middle of Israel's time they're worshipping in the temple, he comes in and desecrates the temple, much as Antiochus did in past years, and Daniel prophesied that, a very similar situation, and he's going to set up the idol to really himself, and at that point the persecution of Israel begins and they run, and that is the period that is going to be three and a half years. So the seven years is clearly divided in the midst of the week into two periods of three and a half years.

Now I don't know how people can just explain this away. Some people say well it's just a general time and we don't know how long it will last. The seven is figurative. When you've got God stating so many times that it's three and a half years, that it's forty-two months, that it's 1260 days, that it's a time, times and a half a time, that it's a one week period and if the first 483 years of Daniel's prophecy were literal years and believe me then the last seven will be. So the period then is a period of seven years.

Now Israel's persecution is going to be kind of interesting. Verse 16, "The earth helped the woman," this is Revelation 12, "The earth helped the woman and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood, which the dragon cast out of his mouth." The army that comes after Israel gets swallowed up by the ground. "And the dragon was angry," I imagine, "and he went to make war with the remnant of her seed." In other words only a certain amount of the Jews are going to escape and Zechariah 13:8-9 tells us how many, two out of three, and of the remaining one-third the antichrist is going to begin to slaughter them. Well I'm only just pinpointing this to show you clearly that it is stated over and over again that the time is three and a half years for the great tribulation and that this would begin in the middle of the week, which means the total time is in fact seven years.

Now go to Revelation 11. Let me show you it again. And again in verse 3 we read this: "During the time of the tribulation, I'll give power unto my two witnesses and they shall prophecy a thousand two hundred and threescore days," 1260 days, "clothed in sackcloth." There again you have the same period of time, three and a half years and during that three and half years the Gentiles are allowed to

run loose.

Now back up to verse 2. Look at it in the middle of verse 2. It is given unto the nations," that is the outer court of the temple, "and the holy city shall they tread under foot," how many months? "Forty two months." Again, three and a half years. And so it is very clear from Scripture that the period of the tribulation is a seven-year period, divided in the middle by an abomination that desecrates the temple and then proceeding for three and a half years, a seven-year period. That's the period.

Now what about the plan? What happens during the tribulation? Go to Zephaniah Chapter 1, I want to give you three Scriptures to look at. Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, the last four books of the Old Testament, Zephaniah, fourth from the end. Zephaniah 1, and here is God's picture of the tribulation, God's picture of this seven years. Verse 12, "And it shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps and punish the men that are settled on their lees." Boy, that's an interesting phrase. It means habitually sinful, who are locked into their habits, settled on their lees. "They say in their heart, 'the Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil.'" They treat God as if He wasn't there. Therefore, their goods shall become a booty, their houses a desolation, they shall also build houses but not inhabit them, they shall plant vineyards but not drink the wine of them." Watch verse 14, "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly."

Now on to verse 15. "That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble, distress, a day of waste, desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers." Now here God, himself, states through the prophet that there is coming a terrible day of judgment. This is the day of the Lord. Another name really for the period of the tribulation is the day of the Lord. Man has had his day. God is going to have His day. Man has been doing his thing and God will do His in the tribulation. Man has been in charge in the earth in a sense doing what he wants, free to rebel, the time is coming when God takes back the earth. The great day of the Lord is God's time to act. And so there's going to be destruction.

Verse 17, "And I'll bring distress upon men that they shall walk like blind men because they have sinned against the Lord. Their blood shall be poured out like dust, their flesh like the dung, or the manure, neither their silver or their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath, but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy for He shall make even a speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land." Now that's the tribulation. God is coming in great and fiery and terrible judgment.

And you know you can go through all the passages in the Scripture dealing with the tribulation, and you can study all of them and you will never find one single word that in any way alleviates the punishment, the wrath, the fear, the terror, the misery, the judgment of a furious God. Now that's a general statement. That's God's indication of the tribulation.

Let's go to Matthew 24 and hear what Jesus said about it. And now it gets more defined. And here is Jesus Christ's own description of the tribulation. This is not second hand. That was God's description, here is Christ's, and it adds more detail. Now you have to begin at Matthew 24:3 because these are the questions that Jesus is going to answer in this Olivet discourse teaching on the end. "And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately saying, and they asked Him two questions: tell us when shall these things be?" That's question number one. Question number two: "And what shall be the sign of Thy coming and at the end of the age?"

Two questions. Now first of all it begins to answer the first question, when shall these things be? How do we know what time it is? How do we know when this is going to happen? And He begins in verse 4. Now very difficult to pinpoint what's chronological here in the sermon on Olivet, future prophecies. It's very difficult to pinpoint it, but let me take a stab at it without being solidly dogmatic. I think that verses 4 through 8 speak of the first half of the tribulation possibly. I'm not really convinced yet but it's a possibility. If that's true then the first few seals also apply to the first half and I may have problems with that. But whether or not you can match these with the seals I'm not sure.

But anyway, let's begin, verse 4: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, 'Take heed that no man deceive you, for many shall come in my name saying, 'I am Christ and deceive many.'" Now here's what He does. He says I want to warn you about false Christ's. I'm going to go away, that's understood, and I'm going to come back, but long before I really come back there's going to be a whole lot of false Messiahs saying I'm Christ returned. Now how are you going to know which one to believe? There are going to be a lot of them coming back and you know what happens? I think Israel believes the antichrist and fowls up even after this warning. But Christ says watch it, because before I get here there's going to be others claiming to be Me. Now here's how you can tell if it's really the time for Me to come. Verse 6, "You shall hear of wars and rumors of wars." That's both hot and cold war. "See that ye be not troubled for all these things must come to pass." Watch. "But the end is not yet."

Now I believe He's speaking of the time of the tribulation now. The tribulation will begin with wars and rumors of wars, Israel living in relative peace. But there will be smoldering wars, but don't panic, the end is not yet. And if a false Christ comes along then don't buy it. For nations shall rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in various places.

Now you're going to begin seeing some tremendous upheavals. There are going to be false Christ's appearing at the beginning of the tribulation time. There's going to be some famines. There's going to be some pestilence and there's going to be some earthquakes. But look at verse 8: "All these are the beginning of sorrow." That's just getting started. And the word the beginning of sorrows is birth pains. The real tribulation hasn't even been born yet, the great tribulation. That's just birth pains.

Just the beginning.

And then I believe beginning with verse 9 you move into the second half of the tribulation. "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, kill you, and you shall be hated of all nations for My name sake." Didn't we say that at the middle of the week when antichrist moves in and desecrates the temple that it's at that time that for three and a half years he begins to persecute Israel? And so that's why I believe that verse 9 begins the second half of the tribulation. "Then shall many be offended and shall betray one another." You know one of the things that's going to happen in the tribulation, it's sad to think of, is there's going to be people who are going to inform on people. Now you may be a believer trying to escape from antichrist and someone's going to betray you to the system, turn you in so they can find you.

There's going to be informants during the tribulation spying out and reporting on the people who are trying to escape from the antichrist. Many are going to be offended and betray one another and hate one another. "And many false prophets shall rise and deceive many." You can compare that with II Thessalonians 2, where they're going to believe lying wonders and all kinds of deceiving miracles and everything. And you know what's going to happen? Because of the terrible pressure in the tribulation verse 12 says, in the great tribulation, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall," what? "Grow cold." Some people are going to attach them selves to the truth and then they're going to drift away. And I believe that's talking about false believers who depart from the truth under the pressure.

But verse 13, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved," but you'll be able to tell the true believers 'cause they'll hand in there against all of the pressure. He's not trying to teach a principle there that if you're able to hold on to your salvation until you die you're saved. He's trying to show you that the only way you'll ever be able to tell who the true believers were in the tribulation are they are the ones who will endure faithfully to the end and who will not grow cold and indifferent and turn away.

"And then," verse 14, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come." There's going to be a fantastic blitz of evangelism in that second three and a half years. God's going to have the 144 thousand and during the time God has two marvelous witnesses. And there's going to be a tremendous preaching of the gospel throughout the whole world, and then the kingdom is going to come, then the return of Christ.

Now that answers question one. When shall these things be? He says, "Watch, when you see wars and rumors of wars and pestilence and earthquake and famine get ready, that's only the beginning. That's only the beginning. And then when you see Israel begin to get persecuted, when you see Israel begin to get killed then you're into it full blast, get ready. And then when you see the gospel of the kingdom being preached in all the world you can start looking up for then shall the end come. So He gives to Israel the information, the signs preceding the return of Christ. That answers question

one.

Question two was what are the signs specifically of Your coming and the end of the age? These things are going to be around the time of those events, but what are the specific signs? Is there something exact? Is there something actual that we can grab? Watch, verse 15, "When you therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, stand in the holy place." In other words when you see them put in the holy place that desecration, when you see them do that during the week, verse 16, "Then let them who are in Judea," what? "Flee." That's the beginning of great tribulation. The great tribulation begins with the desecration.

Verse 17, "Let him who is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house." I mean if you don't have all you need, that's tough. When that happens and you see them start to set that idol up, get out. This is instruction to Israel. It's a gracious God who gives us instruction and it would be a marvelous thing to feel that some Jews would get a hold of this instruction in the first three and a half years. That's why God put it here. When you see that, get out.

Verse 18, "Neither let him who is in the field return back to take his clothes." Just take off. "And woe unto those who are with child and to those who nurse their children in those days and pray that you fight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath" so that it would be limited either by circumstances or by law. You'd better hope it's at the right season because you're going to have to run for your lives. Why? Verse 21, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world." Nothing like it in the history of humanity. "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved but for the elect sake those days shall be shortened."

So verse 23, "If somebody comes along and says here is Christ and there is Christ," what? "Don't you believe it." There are some specific things that have to happen before the true Christ returns and He lays them out. Well the judgment is coming and in verse 27 He says, "As the lightening comes out of the east and shines in the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be." It's going to be fast and furious. "For wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." What he means by that is that the agents of divine judgment are going to devour the spiritually dead and decaying mass of the wicked. The eagles literally can mean vultures and the agents of divine judgment are going to devour the carcass of wicked men, but the signs are clear.

Now look at verse 32 and He gives a further word. "Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves you know that summer is near." If anybody knows anything about fig trees and I don't, seasonally speaking when the little leaves begin to pop out you know that summer is near. "So likewise when you shall see all these things know that it is near even at the doors." What's near? The return of Christ. When you begin to see all these things happen know that His coming is near. Don't buy every false Messiah that comes along. Wait until you see these things happening. And this is the warning to Israel. To us it's immaterial because we're going

to be gone before it begins. But this is God's gracious gift to Israel, the treasure of Scripture that they may see it and read it and comprehend it and know it and be aware, and so the warning of Jesus Christ that a terrible time is coming.

An interesting note in verse 34 and 35, "Verily I say unto you, 'This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.'" And the question is what does that mean? This generation, does that mean that the nation Israel won't die out until the time of the end? It could mean that. That's certainly a valid option. Others would say that it means that the generation that's alive when all of these things begin to happen will not die off until they all happen. Others would interpret it by tying it to verse 32, "When the fig tree puts forth its leaves." And in Scripture if you study Jeremiah 24, you study Joel Chapter 1, you study Hosea I think it's Chapter 9, you'll find in all those places Israel is a fig tree and it may be a fair interpretation to say that when you see Israel bud, the generation that sees that won't die off till all the signs of the end come to pass. If that's true Israel budded in 1948 and we're the last generation. And so Jesus warns about a time that's going to be like no time.

Verse 21, "Not since the beginning of the world was there ever a time like this." And Jesus warns of the fearful time of the tribulation. So we saw what God said about it. We heard what Jesus said about it. Let me take you one more step and show you what John wrote about it.

Revelation Chapter 6, and we're going to look at this in just an overview of generalities and consider it in future days in more detail. Revelation Chapter 6 and I want you to go to verse 15, and I want to invite you to the greatest prayer meeting in the history of the world. There has never been in the history of the world a volume of prayer going up to match the prayer that goes up in Revelation 6:15. Listen to it. "And the kings of the earth and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every slave, and every free man," that's everybody, "Hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains and said to the mountains and rocks, 'fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.' For the great day of His wrath is coming who shall be able to stand?" Friends, that is the greatest prayer meeting in the history of the world. The interesting thing is they're not praying to God, they're praying to the rocks in fear.

This is such a horrible time that the world prays that the mountains might crush them to hide them from this time. You say what is it that's so horrible? Go back to Chapter 6 verse 1. In Chapter 5 God sits on a throne and in His hand He has something all rolled up. It's a scroll. It's curled in His hand. And it was law that any will, according to Roman law, had to be sealed seven times so that nobody could violate it without it becoming very apparent. And the scroll that God holds in His hand is the title deed to the earth. And it is sealed seven times because it is the will of God, the legacy to Jesus Christ who is to be the king of the earth. And God is about to take back the earth and Jesus is the only one that can do it and so finally Jesus comes and takes the scroll and He begins to break the seals, and the scroll is written on the front and on the back and it's jammed with words describing the

judgment. Every time a new seal is broken new judgment is poured out as Jesus takes back the earth. And he breaks seven seals.

The first seal is broken in verse 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 living creatures, those are angels, saying, 'Come.' And I saw and behold a white horse and he that sat on him had a bow and a crown was given to him and he went forth conquering and to conquer." That's a picture of antichrist.

The first seal that cracks open the time of the tribulation is the release of antichrist. Antichrist hits the scene. Then the second seal, and when He had opened the second seal I heard the second living creature say come and there went out another horse that was red and power was given to him that sat on it to take peace from the earth. Antichrist brings a kind of a false superficial peace and that they should kill one another. And it was give to him a great sword.

What happens here is that peace is removed from the earth and a time of killing begins. You know Ezekiel 38, I think it's Ezekiel 38:21, Ezekiel says that every mans sword shall be against his what? Against his brother. And the word for sword indicates *michira*, the assassin's dagger. That what's going to happen is peace is going to stop and men are going to start to slaughter each other. And with all the weapons we have stockpiled away that'll be an easy thing for us to do. You think we kill a lot of people in wars, 637,000 Americans died in war since 1900, but we've killed 800,000 with private guns in our own country. We kill them off a lot faster right here at home than can die in wars. And in that day when blood is let loose wholesale slaughter all over the world.

"The third seal is broken and a black horse comes forth and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand." Verse six, "And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures say, 'A measure of wheat for a denarius.'" A denarius was one day's wages, 15 cents. A slave would work a whole day and earn 15 cents and that's exactly how much it cost to buy one meal of wheat. You know what that is? That's famine. You work all day and all you can do is spend every penny that you've earned to buy one meal. Oh if you want to buy barley you can get three meals out of that and the rich people are hollering, "Don't touch the oil and the wine." A terrible famine is going to hit the earth.

"And then the fourth horse comes and his name was death and hell followed with him," verse eight, "And power was given to them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and with the beasts of the earth." Wild animals turned loose. And one fourth of the population of the world is going to die. It's a shocking thing to realize but according to some statistics 62 ½ million have died in all the wars of man's recorded history. 62 ½ million. If this comes true in our lifetime in our age 800 million will die. That would be the entire population of South America and Europe combined.

"Seal five is opened in verse 9 to 11 and you find martyrs under the altar in heaven who have died for their faith in the tribulation, they're praying, and they're asking Christ to take the earth and they're saying, 'How long, how long until you avenge our blood?'"

The sixth seal is rolled open in verse 12, "And there was a great earthquake and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair and the moon became like blood." If you even traveled in Israel you've seen those Arab tents that are made out of the skin and hair of goats and how pitch black they become and the blackness that's going to happen and the moon is going to become like blood. "The stars of heaven are going to fall to the earth, even like figs that are falling off an overripe fig tree that's shaken at its trunk. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together." It's like a venetian blind. You pull it down to the bottom and let go and it goes blilllp. That's what's going to happen to whole heaven. All the stars fall, everything goes black, the moon turns to blood and the heavens collapse. And that's when everybody starts streaming for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them to hide them from the wrath.

And then you go over to Chapter 8 and if that's not bad enough the seventh seal is opened. "And heaven is stunned into silence." And the seventh seal, just to give you a note, the seventh seal is the seven trumpets. The seventh seal is just the seven trumpets rolled into one seal. And so the trumpets blow, and you remember the trumpets that begin a fearful verse 7. "The first angel sounded and there followed hail and fire mixed with blood cast upon the earth and the third part of trees are burned up and the green grass was burned up. And then the second trumpet and the great mountain while heaven is collapsing a piece of it falls into the sea and a third part of the sea became blood. The third part of the creatures in the sea who had life died and the third part of the ships were destroyed. And the third angel sounded and there fell a great star from heaven burning as it were a lamp." Apparently some fiery comet called Wormwood, which means bitterness, flashes through heaven and deposits some kind of residue in the fresh water and all of the waters became wormwood and many men died in the waters because they were made bitter.

"And the fourth angel sounded and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars, that the third part of them was dark and the day shone not for a third of it and the night likewise." Can you imagine what happens? Somehow God restructures heaven to allow it to collapse again after the first collapse and one third of everything goes out. All of the seasons are thrown into chaos, all of the crops immediately die because there's too much night and not enough day. Everything in terms of seasons, everything in terms of tides, everything that man knows in terms of the earth becomes twisted and confused.

You know why? You say why is God destroying nature like that? God is judging nature because man has misused it. God gave man the revelation of nature for one reason, that man might see in it God, and instead man rejected God and worshipped the creature more than the creator and so God brings about the collapse of nature. And it's not going to be an ecological collapse. It's going to be a

judgmental one.

And that's not all. You think could anything be worse than that? Listen, that's only the preliminaries. Verse 13, "I beheld and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven and he said, 'Woe, woe, woe,' to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpets of the three angels, which are yet to sound."

And the next angel sounds in Chapter 9 and he blows his trumpet and hell releases every bound demon and they come surging up like black smoke out of a pit, verse 2. And they join with the other demons that have been cast down to the earth and they hurt men. "They torment them," verse 5 says. And verse 6 says, "In those days men will seek death and will not find it. Men are going to desire to die and death shall flee from them." The pain and the terror of a demon infested world are so great that men are going to desire to die and they will not be able to die.

Then the sixth trumpet blows and in verse 13 of Chapter 9, "And an army sweeps across the earth and slaughters one third of humanity." One third of humanity is going to die. Verse 15, we know this to be a great army in the east, and verse 16 says it has 200 million soldiers and we know that the Red Chinese already numbers 200 million soldiers, so the army is set. This would mean that one fourth of the earth had already died and here another third of the earth, over half of the earth is going to die in that brief three and a half year period. And you say there's still another trumpet. Yes there is. There's another that's going to blow and it's over in Chapter 16.

The final trumpet is described in seven vials or seven bowls. The final trumpet blows and look what happens and I believe this happens in a rapid-fire staccato succession, bang, bang, bang, bang, just like that rapping up the final hours of the tribulation. God begins to pour out bowls of wrath. The first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth and there fell a fowl painful sore upon the men who had the mark of the beast and upon them who worshipped his image.

The second angel poured out his bowl upon the sea and it became like the blood of a dead man and every living soul died." The first time only a third. Now everything dies. "The third angel poured out his bowl upon the rivers and the fountains of water and they all became blood." Verse 8, "The fourth angel pours out his bowl upon the sun; the power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. The men were scorched with great heat." And what was their reaction? "They blasphemed the name of God and repented not to give Him glory?"

"The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast and his kingdom was full of darkness. The earth goes black and they gnawed their tongues for pain and blasphemed the God of heaven." Isn't it amazing that if men won't respond to grace positively they won't respond to judgment positively either?

"The sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the river Euphrates its water was dried up that the army of the east might be prepared." And the horrible demons are released in verses 13 to 16. Then the seventh and final bowl. The last thing that happens in the terrible tribulation, voices, thunders, lightnings, earthquakes. Verse 20, "Every island fled away, the mountains were not found and there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent," approximately 120 pounds and "Men," did what? "Blasphemed God." That's the tribulation. It's a fearful time. We covered the period. We covered the plan.

Let me say this in closing. What is the purpose? What is God trying to do? The purpose is multiple: one, the tribulation is for Israel. It's to do two things for Israel. I'm just going to state 'em. It's to punish them and it's to save them, to redeem them. And isn't it marvelous that it's during the tribulation that the nation Israel turns to Christ? God has a second purpose in the tribulation and that's for the Gentiles. Number one, to punish the unbelieving Gentiles. Number two Revelation says there's going to be some many Gentiles saved you can't even count them.

The tribulation has two purposes for Israel: judge the rebels, save the believing; two purposes for the nations: judge and save. The tribulation has another purpose. The tribulation is God's way of letting sin run its full course. Letting sin run absolutely hog wild and blow off every bit of steam it has and then God is going to crush it, finally. The tribulation is God's allowing Satan to reveal his true character, allowing Satan to gather his whole realm together and throw out everything they can at God and come up losers.

Fourthly, you say that's all future, yes, but let me tell you what the tribulation is for as far as we're concerned. The tribulation is in the Bible, beloved let me say this, to show you how much God hates sin. Believe me we have a loving God. We have a God who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die for you. We have a God who so loves you that He does everything that He can to draw you to Himself, but we also have a God who hates sin with an absolute eternal hatred and cannot tolerate its existence in His presence and ultimately shall destroy and condemn every sinner who is not cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. You say John why would you preach a sermon like this? Because I want you to know what God thinks about sin so that you can come to the only salvation that has ever been offered, the salvation offered in Jesus Christ.

Since said this: "Though sentenced against an evil work, be not speedily executed, it will be executed at last. Jezebel may flourish in her iniquities for many years but finally the horses will trample her body in the streets and the dogs will gnaw and crunch her bones. Long was the old world left to drive its crimes and jeer at Noah and fling defiance in the face of God, but soon the waters came and their lifeless bodies were dashed upon each other amid the waves of the ocean depth. The trampled law of God will avenge its rightful honor and Christ will not endure the smittings and the taunts and the wrongs of Pilate's hall forever." He's right. The mills of God grind slow, but they grind

exceeding small. And when the seals are broken and the trumpets are blown and the bowls are poured out, everything that God made for human blessedness is going to become an instrument of death. God hates sin, but God loves what? Sinners. He's provided a salvation in Jesus Christ and because of that we are kept from the hour of tribulation, we who receive Christ. Let's pray.

Father, we just thank you for the time together tonight. And Lord we know that we need to preach love and we need to preach grace and we need to preach judgment. I think of the apostle Paul who said, "I have not failed to declare unto you the whole counsel of God." And we think a little bit like John, in Revelation 10, when he said, "When I think about all this, he said, "I have a sweet taste in my mouth because I want Jesus to come and I want him to reign and I want Him to have glory, and He deserves it, but I have a bitter taste in my stomach because I know of the condemnation that has to happen to sinners when He comes." Father, we know the world is headed for a terrible doomsday and we know it won't come from pollution and it won't come from genetic decay, and it won't come from susceptibility to indoctrinization. It won't even come from atomic bombs. It'll come from You. There is a day in which You will judge the world.

But oh God, I would pray that there would be nobody sitting in this place would be here when that happens. I thank you that we can look for the appearing of Jesus, before the tribulation, to take us to be with Him. While your heads are bowed for just a moment of closing we would not preach a message like this without directing it specifically to your own mind and it might be that you are with us tonight and you do not know Jesus Christ as your Savior. He is the only one that can forgive sin, the only one. He's the only one who can cover you with His righteousness. You say, "Well John, I don't know Him as my Savior, I haven't had my sins forgiven, I don't have His righteousness. How do I get it?" It's a simple matter. The Bible says just believe and receive Christ into your life.

I always think of the prayer of a young girl in a hospital bed who said to me, "What do I say?" And I said, "Whatever you want." And she said, "Jesus, if you can save me like John says you can, do it." And He did. It's not very complicated. It's just when you come to a sense of your sinfulness and the knowledge of the judgment of God and you say, "God, be merciful of me a sinner and save me by what Jesus has done." Right in your heart right now if you don't know Jesus Christ and if you're living in your sins why don't you just ask Him to do that, the best way you know how, or the best words you can think of.

Our Father, we ask that You'll really speak to hearts and minds as we close and that you'll give very specific direction in terms of response. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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