

## **AFTER THE RAPTURE**

### **What To Expect for the Next 7 Years**

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#### **SEALS**

**The first seal** introduces the Antichrist (Revelation 6:1-2). From the biblical description, we gather several details: he rides a white horse, which speaks of peace; at the beginning of the tribulation, the Antichrist will come under the pretense of bringing peace to the world (Daniel 9:27). He is given a crown, which indicates that the Antichrist will exercise great authority (Daniel 7:24-25). He holds a bow, which shows his true intentions, and he advances “as a conqueror bent on conquest” (Revelation 6:2).

#### **The second seal**

When the Lamb opens the second seal, great warfare breaks out on the earth (Revelation 6:3-4). This is symbolized by a rider with a large sword on a fiery red horse.

#### **The third seal**

The breaking of the third of the seven seals causes famine (Revelation 6:5-6). The rider that John sees is riding a black horse and “holding a pair of scales in his hand.” Then John hears a declaration that people will have to work all day to earn just a little food.

#### **The fourth seal**

The fourth seal is opened, and John sees a pale horse. “Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him” (Revelation 6:7-8). The result of this fourth seal is that one fourth of the earth’s population are killed “by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.”

#### **The fifth seal**

The scroll’s fifth seal reveals those who will be martyred for their faith in Christ during the tribulation (Revelation 6:9-11; Matthew 24:9). The souls of these martyrs are pictured as dwelling under the altar in heaven. God hears their cries for justice, and He gives each of them a white robe. The martyrs are told to wait “until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.” God promises to avenge them, but the time was not yet (Romans 12:19).

#### **The sixth seal**

When the Lamb of God opens the sixth seal, a devastating earthquake occurs, causing massive upheaval and terrible devastation—along with unusual astronomical phenomena: the sun turns black, and the moon turns blood-red, and “the heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place” (Revelation 6:12-14). Survivors of the sixth seal, regardless of their social

position, take refuge in caves and cry out to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” (verses 16–17).

After the opening of the sixth of the seven seals is an interlude in the book of Revelation. John describes the 144,000 Jews who will be protected during the tribulation (Revelation 7:1–8). Then, in heaven, he sees “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (verse 9). These people wear white robes, hold palm branches, and shout: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (verse 10). John is told who this white-clad multitude is: “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (verse 14). They are given the promise that “‘Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them,’ nor any scorching heat. . . . ‘And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes’” (verses 16–17; Isaiah 25:8; 49:10).

### **The seventh seal**

When the Lamb opens the seventh seal, “there was silence in heaven for about half an hour” (Revelation 8:1). The judgments that lead up to the close of the tribulation are now visible in the scroll and are so severe that a solemn silence falls upon all of heaven. The seventh seal obviously introduces the next series of judgments, for John immediately sees seven angels who are handed seven trumpets ready to sound (verse 2). An eighth angel takes a censer and burns “much incense” in it, representing the prayers of God’s people (verses 3–4). The angel then took the same censer, “filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake” (verse 5).

Once the seven seal judgments are finished, the next part of the tribulation, featuring the seven trumpet judgments, is ready to begin.

## **TRUMPETS**

### **The first trumpet**

When the first angel sounds his trumpet, the world experiences “hail and fire mixed with blood” (Revelation 8:7). One third of the world’s trees are burned up in this plague, and all the grass is consumed. This judgment bears some similarities to the seventh plague in Egypt (see Exodus 9:23–24).

### **The second trumpet**

In heaven, a second angel sounds a trumpet. The result is that “something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea” (Revelation 8:8). A third of the sea turns to blood, a third of the ships sink, and a third of ocean life dies (verse 9). This judgment is similar in some ways to the first plague in Egypt (see Exodus 7:20–21).

### **The third trumpet**

The third trumpet judgment is like the second, except it affects the world’s freshwater lakes and rivers instead of the oceans. Specifically, “a great star, blazing like a torch” falls from the sky and poisons a third of the water supply (Revelation 8:10). This star is given the name Wormwood, and many people die (verse 11). In botany, wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*) is a shrub-like plant noted for its extreme bitterness and poisonous properties.

### **The fourth trumpet**

The fourth of the seven trumpets brings about changes in the heavens. “A third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night” (Revelation 8:12).

Following the fourth trumpet judgment, John notes a special warning that comes from an eagle flying through the air. This eagle cries out with a loud voice, saying, “Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels” (Revelation 8:13). For this reason, the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets are referred to as the “three woes.”

### **The fifth trumpet**

The fifth trumpet (and the first woe) results in a terrifying plague of “demonic locusts” that attack and torture the unsaved for five months (Revelation 9:1–11). The plague begins with a “star” falling from heaven. This star is most likely a fallen angel, as he is given “the key to the shaft of the Abyss” (verse 1). He opens the Abyss, releasing a horde of “locusts” with “power like that of scorpions” (verse 3). The locusts do not touch the plant life of earth; rather, they head straight for “those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads” (verse 4). For five months, these locusts torment people, whose agony is so great that they will wish to die, “but death will elude them” (verse 6). The locusts are not allowed to kill anyone, only to torture them.

These demonic “locusts” have a “king,” who is the angel of the Abyss (Revelation 9:11). In Hebrew his name is Abaddon, and in Greek it’s Apollyon, meaning “Destroyer.” The locusts themselves are described in unusual terms: they look like “horses prepared for battle” (verse 7). They wear something like “crowns of gold,” and their faces are

vaguely human (verse 7). They have hair “like women’s hair” and teeth “like lions’ teeth” (verse 8). They have something like iron breastplates, and their wings sound like “the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle” (verse 9). Like scorpions, they have stings in their tails (verse 10). This description has prompted many different interpretations: is this a vision of helicopters, of barbarian warriors, of a satanically empowered army, or of actual creatures from the pit of hell? We won’t know for sure until it happens.

### **The sixth trumpet**

The sixth trumpet (and the second woe) involves the onslaught of another demonic horde (Revelation 9:12–21). Once the sixth trumpet sounds, a voice from the altar of God calls for the release of “the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates” (verse 14). These four angels had been kept in captivity for just this purpose: to wreak destruction during the tribulation (verse 15). These four wicked angels lead a supernatural cavalry of thousands upon thousands to kill a third of humanity (verse 16). The riders have breastplates of “fiery red, dark blue, and yellow” (verse 17). Their horses have “the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur,” and “their tails were like snakes” (verses 18–19). They kill with their mouths and with their tails.

Despite the severity and horror of these plagues, the survivors on earth still refuse to repent. They continue in their idolatry, their murder, their sorcery, their sexual immorality, and their theft (Revelation 9:20–21).

Following the sixth trumpet judgment is a literary interlude. John sees an angel descend from heaven with a little scroll in his hand. A promise is given that “the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet” (Revelation 10:7), and John is told that he must prophesy some more (verse 11). Next comes a description of the two witnesses who will preach in Jerusalem and perform miracles before they are murdered. God will then raise them back to life and take them to heaven (Revelation 11:1–13).

### **The seventh trumpet**

The seventh trumpet (and the third woe) sounds, and immediately there are loud voices in heaven saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15). The twenty-four elders say, “The time has come for . . . destroying those who destroy the earth” (verse 18). Obviously, God is about to wrap things up once and for all. At the sound of the seventh trumpet, the temple of God is opened in heaven, and “within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm” (verse 19).

## **BOWLS**

### **The first bowl**

The first angel pours out the first bowl on the land, “and ugly, festering sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped its image” (Revelation 16:2). This plague is targeted at those who have committed themselves to the Antichrist; tribulation saints will not be affected by these sores.

### **The second bowl**

The second bowl is poured out on the sea, turning the water “into blood like that of a dead person, and every living thing in the sea died” (Revelation 16:3). A third of the sea life had already perished with the sounding of the second trumpet (Revelation 8:9), and now the rest of the sea life is gone. The oceans are dead.

### **The third bowl**

When the third bowl of God’s wrath is poured out, the rivers and freshwater springs also turn into blood (Revelation 16:4–5). The angel in charge of the water says, “You are just in these judgments, O Holy One, you who are and who were; for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve” (verses 5–6). The altar in heaven responds, “Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments” (verse 7).

### **The fourth bowl**

The fourth angel pours out his bowl on the sun, “and the sun was allowed to scorch people with fire. They were seared by the intense heat” (Revelation 16:8–9). Rather than repent of their sin, the wicked inhabitants of the earth “cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him” (verse 9).

### **The fifth bowl**

The fifth of the seven bowls causes the kingdom of the beast to be plunged into great darkness. The pain and suffering of the wicked intensify, so that people gnaw their tongues in agony (Revelation 16:10–11). Still, the followers of the Antichrist “refused to repent of what they had done” (verse 11).

### **The sixth bowl**

The sixth angel pours out his bowl of judgment on the Euphrates River. That river is dried up in preparation for the kings of the East making their way to their own destruction (Revelation 16:12). John then sees three unclean spirits “that looked like frogs” coming from the mouths of Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet (verse 13). These demons perform miracles and deceive the kings of the earth and gather

them to the final battle on the Day of the Lord (verse 14). Under demonic influence, “the kings [gather] together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon” (verse 16).

### **The seventh bowl**

The seventh bowl is emptied into the atmosphere. A loud voice in heaven says, “It is done!” (Revelation 16:17). The seventh bowl results in flashes of lightning and an earthquake so severe that “no earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake” (verse 18). Jerusalem is split into three parts, and the cities of the world collapse (verse 19). Islands are flooded, and mountains disappear (verse 20). Giant hailstones, “each weighing about a hundred pounds, fell on people” (verse 21). Those under judgment “cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible” (verse 21).

One of the angels of the seven bowl judgments then shows John the fate of Babylon the Great (Revelation 17), as God avenges “the blood of prophets and of God’s holy people, of all who have been slaughtered on the earth” (Revelation 18:24). The world mourns the fall of Babylon (chapter 18), but heaven rejoices (chapter 19). Jesus Christ then returns in glory to defeat the armies of the Antichrist at Armageddon (Revelation 19:11–21) and to set up His kingdom on earth (Revelation 20:1–6).