

The Day of the Lord: When, How and Why?

Part One – God Shakes the Earth

“Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.” (Isaiah 13:6)

Introduction

The purpose of this short series of articles is to contribute some new research towards the development of a truly Biblical Pre-Trib prophetic timeline. These articles are not meant to be taken as a challenge to the Pre-Trib position but are instead presented for the purpose of perfecting and strengthening the teaching of the Pre-Trib Rapture.

The Pre-Trib discussion concerning the timeline of prophetic events is currently dominated by terms such as ‘seven-year tribulation’ and ‘great tribulation.’ However, when we turn to the words of the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament Apostles, we find that the term most consistently used in reference to the end-times is ‘the Day of the Lord.’ The actual term ‘seven-year tribulation’ does not appear in Scripture, and elements of Daniel’s 70th Week are not even referred to in the book of Revelation until chapter 11. When it comes to the term ‘great tribulation’ we find that it appears in Bible prophecy only three times, which helps to explain why Pre-Trib scholars remain divided as to what period of time it actually refers to. Some say it refers to the entire 70th Week (Fruchtenbaum), while others teach that it applies only to the second half of the 70th Week (Ice).

The current Pre-Trib view was systematically developed with a focus upon the ‘seven-year tribulation,’ and today everyone familiar with this prophetic model can explain when, how and why the ‘seven-year tribulation’ begins. It begins, we are told, with the signing of a covenant involving Israel and the Antichrist; it brings a period of ‘false peace’ for Israel; and both the Antichrist and the beginning of the 70th Week covenant is represented in the book of Revelation through the symbolism of the first Seal (Revelation 6:2). Additionally, almost as an afterthought, the first Seal is also given the distinction of marking the beginning of the Day of the Lord.

As far as most Pre-Trib scholars are concerned the dominant theme of the end-times is understood to be the ‘seven-year tribulation,’ and the ‘Day of the Lord’ is of only *secondary* importance. But what if this perspective is wrong? What happens when the Day of the Lord is viewed as the *dominant theme* of the Bible’s end-times predictions, which the many references in the Old and New Testaments suggest? The result of this proposed change in perspective can be read in the study that follows, as we answer the questions of “When, How and Why?” regarding the Day of the Lord. In other words, what evidence can be provided that explains *when* the Day of the Lord begins in the book of Revelation? What does the Bible say concerning *how* this terrible ‘Day’ begins? Furthermore, *why* does the Day of the Lord even begin? What prompts God to finally ‘break His silence’ and intervene in human affairs in a decisive and catastrophic manner? Finally, after all of these questions are answered, I believe it then becomes clear exactly *when* the Day of the Lord begins in relation to the 70th Week of Daniel.

Before we move on let me be perfectly clear that the answer to this final question will be in harmony with current Pre-Trib scholarship. Through this study of the Day of the Lord a different route will be taken, but we will arrive at the same destination: the Day of the Lord begins *prior to* the start of the 70th Week of Daniel. Of course this also means that the Rapture of the Church occurs *before* the ‘seven-year tribulation’ of the 70th Week of Daniel, and the Pre-Trib Rapture is thus perfected, strengthened and preserved.

Characteristics of the Day of the Lord

Let’s begin with the question of “How does the Day of the Lord begin?” A succinct answer to this question is provided by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3,

“Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that **the day of the Lord** will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”

When we examine these words closely we see that Paul is simply re-stating the teachings of Jesus concerning the Day of the Lord, and there are at least seven common elements between Paul’s message to the Thessalonians and the Olivet Discourse given by Jesus.

1. Paul says not to worry about “times and dates” when it comes to the Day of the Lord, while Jesus says that “*No one knows about **that day** or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*” (Matthew 24:36).

2. Both Paul and Jesus (Matthew 24:43) compare the coming of the Day of the Lord to the coming of a “thief in the night,” which is a comparison repeated by the Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3:10. This stands in contrast to the actual Second Coming of Jesus to the earth. The Day of the Lord will begin unexpectedly for unbelievers and is an unknown day, but the day of Christ’s physical return will be a known day and will be entirely *expected* by unbelievers, and in fact militarily resisted, as shown in Revelation 16:13-16, 19:19, and Psalm 2.

3. Paul says that the Day of the Lord will be preceded by a worldly expectation of “peace and safety,” while Jesus compares the time before the Day of the Lord to the carefree attitude of unbelievers prior to the flood (Matthew 24:37-39).

4. Paul says that the Day of the Lord will begin with “sudden destruction,” and Jesus compares it with the sudden destruction of Noah’s flood which surprised and destroyed the willfully ignorant unbelievers (Matthew 24:39).

5. Both Paul and Jesus use the metaphor of a pregnant woman. Jesus speaks of the signs that precede the Day of the Lord as the “*beginning of birthpangs*” (Matthew 24:8), while Paul speaks of the coming of the Day of the Lord as the sudden onset of the actual labor.

6. Going further into Paul’s message in 1 Thessalonians 5 we find that Paul admonishes his readers saying, “So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled” (v.6), which parallels the warning from Jesus for believers to “*keep watch*” so as not to be surprised by the “*thief in the night*” (Matthew 24:42-44). We also find the admonition to “*keep watch*” for the coming of the Day of the Lord within a passage of the Olivet Discourse found in the Gospel of Luke:

□ “*Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.*” (Luke 21:34-36)

□ In the passage above Jesus again speaks about the suddenness and unexpectedness of the coming of “*that day*” which, as always, can only refer to the apocalyptic ‘Day of the Lord.’

□ 7. The final common element within the teachings of Jesus and Paul regarding the Day of the Lord that we will examine is the possibility of *escape*. In the passage above Jesus says that those who faithfully watch and pray will be able to “*escape*” the events of “*that day*” and “*stand before the Son of Man.*” Paul mentions escape in the negative sense, saying that unbelievers “*will not escape*” the unexpected coming of the Day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:3). If we compare Paul’s words and Luke 21:34-36 with Matthew 24:40-41, we see that those who are “*taken*” are those who “*escape*” the Day of the Lord to “*stand before the Son of Man,*” whereas those who are “*left*” are those who “*do not escape,*” who are *left behind* to face the wrath of the Day of the Lord.

Destruction from the Almighty

□ One element that appears to be highly stressed regarding the coming of the Day of the Lord according to Jesus and Paul is the fact that it will come with great destruction. The Old Testament prophets Isaiah and Joel also speak about the destructive nature of the Day of the Lord:

Isaiah: “Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; **it will come like destruction from the Almighty.** Because of this, all hands will go limp, every man’s heart will melt. Terror will seize them, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe *like a woman in labor*. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame. See, the day of the LORD is coming -- a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger-- to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it.” (13:6-9)

Joel: “Alas for that day! For the day of the LORD is near; **it will come like destruction from the Almighty.**” (1:15)

Isaiah reveals that the ultimate purpose of the Day of the Lord is to “*destroy the sinners*” of the world. Other prophets also mention this aspect of global judgment that is directed against the nations of the world:

Ezekiel: “The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, prophesy and say: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: “Wail and say, “Alas for that day!” For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near-- a day of clouds, **a time of doom for the nations.**” (30:1-3)

Obadiah: “The day of the LORD is near **for all nations.** As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head. Just as you drank on my holy hill, so all the nations will drink continually; they will drink and drink and be as if they had never been.” (1:15-16)

From all of these references we can see that the Day of the Lord will begin with great destruction and that it is a judgment aimed at the nations and the sinners of the world. Yet we still have not discovered exactly *how* this global judgment will begin and what form it will initially take.

Proponents of the predominant Pre-Trib view (Fruchtenbaum, Walvoord) place the start of the Day of the Lord at the opening of the first Seal, which they teach also marks the beginning of the 70th Week covenant of Daniel 9:27. We know that the 70th Week begins with a seven-year peace covenant, while the Day of the Lord begins with sudden destruction. How can these seemingly different events, beginning in radically different ways, begin at the same time? Where is the “*sudden destruction*” in the first Seal of Revelation?

There is really nothing in the Bible that explicitly connects the first Seal with the beginning of the Day of the Lord. This connection was made by early Pre-Trib scholars because of their focus on the ‘seven-year tribulation.’ Once it was decided that the first Seal represents both the Antichrist and the beginning of the 70th Week covenant these scholars were “*painted into a corner,*” so to speak, and forced to conclude that the first Seal must also mark the beginning of the Day of the Lord. In the next section we will break away from this questionable emphasis on the first Seal and examine the Scriptures from a fresh perspective. In the end it will become clear that the Day of the Lord does not begin with a diplomatic or *bureaucratic* event such as the signing of the 70th Week covenant, but with the sudden and destructive outpouring of the wrath of God upon the entire world!

The Shaking of the Earth

When we examine the Old Testament warnings about the coming of the Day of the Lord we find that the catastrophic event that marks the beginning of that ‘Day’ is **the shaking of the earth**. The very first explicit Old Testament warning about the Day

of the Lord is given through the prophet Isaiah, which is a message that should remind us of a similar passage in the book of Revelation:

“Go into the rocks, hide in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty! The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. **The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty**, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled)... The arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, and the idols will totally disappear. Men will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, **when he rises to shake the earth**. In that day men will throw away to the rodents and bats their idols of silver and idols of gold, which they made to worship. They will flee to caverns in the rocks and to the overhanging crags from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, **when he rises to shake the earth.**” (Isaiah 2:10-21)

Similar predictions of the shaking of the earth and the Day of the Lord are given again by Isaiah, and also by the prophet Joel:

Isaiah: “Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; **and the earth will shake from its place** at the wrath of the LORD Almighty, in the day of his burning anger.” (13:13)

Joel: “For the day of the LORD is near... The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; **the earth and the sky will tremble**. But the LORD will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.” (3:14-16)

It is clear that the Day of the Lord will involve the shaking of the earth, but how can we be certain that such an event marks the *very beginning* of the Day of the Lord? The answer comes when we examine another prophecy given by the prophet Joel. Both Joel’s prophecy and the prophecy of Isaiah 2 are then shown fulfilled in the book of Revelation. First Joel’s prophecy:

“The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.” (Joel 2:31)

There are actually three Biblical prophecies that must be fulfilled *before* the beginning of the Day of the Lord, but this is the one that helps us pinpoint the beginning of the Day of the Lord in Revelation. (The other two are Malachi 4:5 and 2 Thessalonians 2:3.) Aside from Revelation, the only other time that a blood red moon is mentioned is in Acts 2 when Peter quotes Joel 2:31 after receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. I believe that Peter’s strange reference to Joel’s prophecy was made simply to indicate the duration of the Church Age. It began with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and it will end just before the Day of the Lord begins *after* the sign of the blood red moon. Here is the fulfillment of Joel 2:31 and Isaiah 2 in Revelation:

“I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. **The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place**. Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called 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?’” (Revelation 6:12-17)

Joel predicts that the sun will go dark and the moon will turn red like blood *before* the coming of the Day of the Lord. Isaiah predicts *how* the Day of the Lord will *begin* when he says that “Men will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth” (2:19,21). This shaking of the entire earth occurs as a result of the sixth Seal and is described by John in verse 14,

“The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.”

After the sixth Seal is opened the sky will go dark and there will be a magnificent meteor shower of falling stars appearing “like figs falling from a fig tree.” Then the earth will tilt on its axis, changing the position of every mountain and island, and causing the fixed stars in the sky to appear to move overhead just like the letters on a scroll move as the scroll is rolled up. In other passages Isaiah gives further descriptions of this shaking of the globe that causes the sky to roll up like a scroll:

“The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken. The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls—never to rise again. In **that day** the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below.” (Isaiah 24:19-21)

“Come near, you nations, and listen; pay attention, you peoples! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world, and all that comes out of it! The LORD is angry with all nations; his wrath is upon all their armies. He will totally destroy them, he will give them over to slaughter. Their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will send up a stench; the mountains will be soaked with their blood. All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree.” (Isaiah 34:1-4)

The Day of the Lord will begin with the catastrophic shaking of the entire earth by the hand of God. Isaiah declares that “**The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty**” (2:12), and after the sixth Seal is opened and the earth is shaken the “proud and lofty” (“the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty”), along with everyone

else, flee in terror to hide in the caves and hills. Then they cry out to the rocks in desperation and unmistakably declare that this **great day** has finally come:

“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?” (Revelation 6:16-17)

Conclusion

The great and terrible Day of the Lord can be conclusively shown to begin after the opening of the sixth Seal of Revelation. Just as Jesus, Paul, and the Old Testament prophets predict, it will begin suddenly and destructively, and it will affect every single person on the face of the earth. The Day of the Lord will be *preceded* by Joel’s sign of a darkened sun and blood red moon, and then it will *begin* with the shaking of the earth by God’s own power. It will be an unmistakable display of God’s “wrath and fierce anger” against an unbelieving and sinful world, and every person on the face of the earth will react in fear and know that God has acted.

This article, “**God Shakes the Earth**,” is the first article in a three-part series. It has answered the questions of “When does the Day of the Lord begin within the book of Revelation?” and “How does the Day of the Lord begin?”

The next article, “**God Saves Israel**,” will answer the important question of “Why does the Day of the Lord begin?” We will also ask “When does the Day of the Lord begin in relation to the 70th Week of Daniel?” and our answer will help to explain how this new chronology is a *Pre-Trib* chronology.

The Day of the Lord: When, How and Why?

Part Two – God Saves Israel

“For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion’s cause.” (Isaiah 34:8)

Introduction

In Part One of this series we discovered that the Day of the Lord begins when God suddenly shakes the earth after the opening of the sixth Seal of Revelation. Now we must figure out exactly *why* God decides to strike the earth with such a devastating judgment. The answer, once again, can be discovered by examining the words of the Old Testament prophets concerning this long-expected apocalyptic Day.

Anger, Wrath, and Divine Protection

According to Isaiah 34:8, the purpose of the Day of the Lord is “to uphold Zion’s cause.” The divine purpose of the Day of the Lord is also revealed by the prophet Joel:

“For the **day of the LORD** is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; *the earth and the sky will tremble*. But the LORD will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.” (Joel 3:14-16)

Joel writes that the Day of the Lord will be a time when the Lord will “roar from Zion” and “thunder from Jerusalem” and that He will be a “refuge” and a “stronghold” for His people Israel. God will protect the faithful of Israel during the Day of the Lord, which other prophets describe as a day of judgment that is the result of God’s **anger** and **wrath**:

“See, the day of the LORD is coming –a cruel day, **with wrath and fierce anger**– to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. . . Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and *the earth will shake from its place* at the **wrath** of the LORD Almighty, in the day of his **burning anger**.” (Isaiah 13:9,13)

“Gather together, gather together, O shameful nation, before the appointed time arrives and that day sweeps on like chaff, before the **fierce anger** of the LORD comes upon you, before **the day of the LORD’s wrath** comes upon you. Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on **the day of the LORD’s anger**.” (Zephaniah 2:1-3)

But what could possibly arouse God’s anger to such an extent that He would reach out and shake the entire earth? This question is very clearly answered by the prophet Ezekiel:

“This is what will happen in **that day**: When Gog attacks the land of Israel, **my hot anger will be aroused**, declares the Sovereign LORD. **In my zeal and fiery wrath** I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, and *all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence*. The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground.” (Ezekiel 38:18-20)

The passage that you have just read is part of Ezekiel’s description of the events that provoke God’s anger and wrath, causing Him to strike out in judgment against the nations of the world in defense of His people Israel. This text is a description of the beginning of the great and terrible Day of the Lord and it is the very same event that is described in the sixth Seal judgment of Revelation 6:12-17. The parallels are clear and unmistakable and they become even more obvious when compared with the descriptions of the beginning of the Day of the Lord that are provided by Jesus and Paul. We will now examine five of these parallels.

1. Peace and Safety

Paul writes that “people” will be saying “peace and safety” prior to the Day of the Lord, and Jesus speaks of a similar attitude with people “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage” just before “that day” comes (Matthew 24:38). In another passage Jesus warns believers to resist the temptations of “dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life” (Luke 21:34) which also implies an apparently peaceful setting leading up to the Day of the Lord.

When we turn to Ezekiel we find that Israel is living in “**safety**” (38:8 and 38:14), and Israel is described as a “**peaceful and unsuspecting people**” (38:11). Furthermore, in an enigmatic reference, we are told that God will also strike “those who **live in safety** in the coastlands, and they will know that I am the LORD” (39:6).

Author and Bible scholar Doug Berner has specialized in the study of Ezekiel 38-39 and in his article “**A False Sense of Security**” (see www.thesilenceisbroken.us) he focuses on the meaning of the word “safety” (*betach*) in Ezekiel’s context. He concludes that Israel can be more properly described as “dwelling carelessly under a false sense of security” rather than existing in “an actual condition of safety.” Once again this compares favorably with Paul’s description of the attitude of unbelievers prior to the Day of the Lord. They will be saying “peace and safety” but then “destruction will come on them suddenly... and they will not escape” (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

2. Sudden Destruction

The references above also point to the fact that the Day of the Lord, from all perspectives, will come suddenly and with great destruction. The initial “destruction” of the beginning of the Day of the Lord is described in Ezekiel 38:20, “*The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground.*” From Ezekiel’s description it seems as if the mountains and rocks will answer the plea voiced by the people of the earth as a result of the sixth Seal: “*They called 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!’*” (Revelation 6:16).

Jesus compares the destruction of the Day of the Lord with the destruction of the flood of Noah, which destroyed all of the unbelievers. It is true that not all unbelievers will be destroyed at the *beginning* of the Day of the Lord, but this does not mean that the comparison does not apply. The destruction of the Day of the Lord will come in stages and at the final stage, prior to the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, the wicked will be destroyed and the righteous will be invited into the Kingdom. In the end, as far as unbelievers are concerned, the Day of the Lord will deliver the same final and absolute result as Noah’s flood.

3. A Global Earthquake

The Old Testament prophets are clear that the Day of the Lord will begin with the shaking of the earth, and we have already shown how this event is also described in Revelation as the sixth Seal judgment. If we look closer we can see exactly how this shaking of the earth begins. Recall how the events of the sixth Seal are first described:

“I watched as he opened the sixth seal. **There was a great earthquake...**” (Revelation 6:12).

Apparently the seismic activity of the Day of the Lord begins as a local earthquake. Ezekiel reveals exactly where this initial earthquake occurs when he writes, “In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake **in the land of Israel**” (38:19). In Ezekiel’s description, as in Revelation, this earthquake expands so that all the people on the face of the earth “tremble” at the presence of God (38:20). Joel offers words to the same effect in his description of the Day of the Lord. He says that “The LORD will roar **from Zion** and thunder **from Jerusalem**; *the earth and the sky will tremble*” (3:16).

From all of these descriptions we can deduce that perhaps Jerusalem, God’s holy city, will be the exact *epicenter* of this great global earthquake. The tremors will first be felt in Israel, but then they will radiate outwards, gathering in momentum and intensity until the shaking of the earth affects the entire globe!

4. The Wrath of God

Virtually all of the texts that describe the beginning of the Day of the Lord explain that it is the result of the **wrath** of God. This is true in Ezekiel, who writes of God’s “zeal” and “fiery **wrath**” that manifests as the initial earthquake in Israel, and references to “**wrath**” are also found in the statements from mankind after the earth is shaken:

“...hide us from... the **wrath** of the Lamb! For the great day of their **wrath** has come...” (Revelation 6:16-17)

The Apostle Paul also mentions **wrath** in connection with the beginning of the Day of the Lord,

“...you know very well that the **day of the Lord** will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness... For God did not appoint us to suffer **wrath** but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 5:2-5,9)

5. The Fear of Man

The final parallel that we will examine, that unites all of these separate descriptions of the beginning of the Day of the Lord, concerns humanity’s fearful response to God’s actions:

Isaiah 2:19, “*Men will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth.*”

Isaiah 13:6-8, “Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. Because of this, *all hands will go limp, every man's heart will melt. Terror will seize them, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame.*”

Ezekiel 38:20, “The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, and *all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence.*”

Luke 21:25-26 “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, *nations will be in anguish and perplexity* at the roaring and tossing of the sea. *Men will faint from terror*, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”

Revelation 6:14-17, “The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man *hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains*. They called 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?*”

The Destruction of the Magog Alliance

What we have discovered so far is that the Day of the Lord begins because of the threat against Israel that comes from the Magog Alliance of Ezekiel 38-39. Yet the very first judgment that comes from God is not directed specifically at the armies of the invasion, or against their home countries, but is a shaking of the earth directed against the entire world!

It seems that there is a brief interlude between the shaking of the earth and the subsequent judgment that is directed specifically against the Magog Alliance. The destruction of the invaders is described in Ezekiel and, once again, there is a parallel description in the book of Revelation:

“I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign LORD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. I will execute judgment upon him with plague and *bloodshed*; I will pour down torrents of rain, **hailstones and burning sulfur** on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him. And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.” (Ezekiel 38:21-23)

“The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came **hail and fire mixed with blood**, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.” (Revelation 8:7)

If the first Trumpet judgment of Revelation is indeed directed at the armies and nations of the Magog Alliance then affected areas would include the Middle East, Turkey, parts of western Asia, parts of Africa, and perhaps all of Russia. The total of these regions, in addition to the undefined area of the “coastlands” mentioned in Ezekiel 39:6, would, according to Revelation 8:7, add up to one third of the land area of the earth.

Isaiah's Descriptions

Once more we find that there are at least two passages from the prophet Isaiah that help us to better understand the Magog invasion that leads to God's intervention on behalf of Israel and the judgments of the Day of the Lord. The first of these passages begins with a promise from God,

“O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you.” (Isaiah 30:19)

God promises that He will rescue Israel when they cry for help, and then Isaiah describes how Israel's *rescuer* will appear:

“See, the **Name of the LORD** comes from afar, with burning *anger* and dense clouds of smoke; his lips are full of *wrath*, and his tongue is a consuming fire. His breath is like a rushing torrent, rising up to the neck. **He shakes the nations in the sieve of destruction; he places in the jaws of the peoples a bit that leads them astray...** The LORD will cause men to hear his majestic voice and will make them see his arm coming down with raging anger and consuming fire, with cloudburst, thunderstorm and hail.” (Isaiah 30:27-28,30)

There are so many elements within this passage that connect with what we have learned so far that it is hard to decide where to begin. The appearance of the “Name of the Lord” here in the Old Testament can only be a mysterious reference to the Messiah, the second member of the Godhead, who is the ultimate savior of Israel. Also, the Day of the Lord is obviously in mind here because of the references to “anger,” “wrath,” and “destruction.” But next we should note the order of events:

—First the nations are shaken, which lines up with our understanding of how the Day of the Lord begins, and how God's wrath first manifests in Ezekiel 38:19-20.

—Then the “peoples” are led astray by God placing **a bit in their jaws**. The allusion to Ezekiel 38:3-4 here is certainly remarkable, which states, “*I am against you, O Gog... I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army...*” We know that the Magog Alliance includes many nations so the reference to “peoples” (plural) that are “led astray” in Isaiah's description makes sense.

—Finally, Isaiah says that the world will see God’s “arm coming down” in a judgment of “consuming fire, cloudburst, thunderstorm and hail.” This connects directly with the judgment that destroys the Magog invasion as described in Ezekiel and in the first Trumpet of Revelation. The “arm coming down” equates with “poured down” or “hurled down”; the “consuming fire” equates with the “burning sulfur” and the “fire” that destroys a third of the earth; the “cloudburst and thunderstorm” equates with the “torrents of rain” described by Ezekiel; and Isaiah’s reference to “hail” also appears in both Ezekiel and Revelation.

In Ezekiel we are given the impression that God’s wrath is only stirred after the Magog Alliance has begun its invasion of Israel: “*This is what will happen in that day: When Gog attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger will be aroused...*” (38:18). Yet at the same time we read that it is actually God who pulls Gog into the conflict, almost as if it is against his will! Furthermore, we find that the first judgment described in Ezekiel 38:19-20 is not directed specifically at the invaders, but against the entire world. How can we make sense of this confusing scenario? We should back up a bit and examine a verse that makes it clear who first devises the plan for this group of nations to attack Israel:

“This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On **that day thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil scheme.** You will say, ‘I will invade a land of unwalled villages; I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people—all of them living without walls and without gates and bars. I will plunder and loot and turn my hand against the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations, rich in livestock and goods, living at the center of the land.’” (Isaiah 38:10-12)

From this text it is clear that the plan to invade and destroy Israel is initially conceived in the dark heart of Gog, the leader of the land of Magog. God does not tempt Gog into devising the scheme, but it is God who ensures that the invasion takes place at the time of His own choosing. That is why God pulls the invaders by the jaws, as described by both Ezekiel and Isaiah.

The scenario that I believe should be considered is that perhaps the shaking of the earth takes place first, and then the invasion begins in the immediate aftermath. Is it possible that Israel’s enemies will view the shaking of the earth as a gift from Allah, creating a tempting opportunity to attack Israel? An event involving the shifting of the earth’s poles would certainly cripple Israel’s defenses, as well as the power of the U.S. Military that is Israel’s most powerful protector in the region. Both countries are highly dependent on orbiting satellites and fixed points of latitude and longitude for communication, navigation, and the targeting of weapons, and after a polar shift all of these technologies would be completely useless.

Indeed, this is the order of events that is given in Isaiah 30:27-30: first the shaking of the earth, then the divine act of leading the nations astray by the jaws, and finally the destruction of those invaders meted out by Israel’s divine Savior. When we look in Revelation at what happens after the sixth Seal (global earthquake) and just before the first Trumpet (destruction of the Magog Alliance) we see that there is a curious interlude that is relevant to our investigation:

“When he opened the seventh seal, there was *silence in heaven for about half an hour.*” (Revelation 8:1)

Is it possible that the Magog invasion of Israel begins *after* the shaking of the earth during this brief period of silence? The other prophecy from Isaiah that may help us answer this question is Isaiah 18.

“Woe to the land of whirring wings along the rivers of Cush, which sends envoys by sea in papyrus boats over the water. Go, swift messengers, to a people tall and smooth-skinned, to a people feared far and wide, an aggressive nation of strange speech, whose land is divided by rivers. All you people of the world, you who live on the earth, when a banner is raised on the mountains, you will see it, and when a trumpet sounds, you will hear it. This is what the LORD says to me: “*I will remain quiet and will look on from my dwelling place, like shimmering heat in the sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.*” For, before the harvest, when the blossom is gone and the flower becomes a ripening grape, he will cut off the shoots with pruning knives, and cut down and take away the spreading branches. *They will all be left to the mountain birds of prey and to the wild animals; the birds will feed on them all summer, the wild animals all winter.*” (Isaiah 18:1-6)

I am not the first Bible scholar to see allusions to Ezekiel 38-39 within this text. Cush is a member of the Magog Alliance, and it could be that Isaiah is describing the formation of this Alliance when envoys from Cush travel to the land described as strange, aggressive and powerful (Russia?). In any case, the result of this diplomatic activity seems to be the raising of a banner on the mountains, which may be a description of the Magog invasion that comes “against the mountains of Israel” (Ezekiel 39:2). God’s response to this activity, which parallels the strange “silence in heaven” of Revelation 8:1, is to “remain quiet” from His “dwelling place.” However, it is apparent that God’s silence does not last long, because the end result of the invading army is compared to grapes that are reaped at the harvest. The final description of the invaders’ fate in Isaiah 18:6 compares almost exactly with the description that can be read in Ezekiel 39:17-20.

The Aftermath of the Invasion

Now that we have discovered exactly “Why?” the Day of the Lord begins we will turn our attention to the task of connecting the Magog invasion with the timeline of the 70th Week of Daniel. We are looking for evidence of a specific seven-year period and, fortunately for us, the prophet Ezekiel provides just such a reference within his description of the aftermath of the invasion. Notice as well the first verse of this passage, which should eliminate any doubt that Ezekiel 38-39 describes the beginning of the great and terrible Day of the Lord:

“It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign LORD. This is the day I have spoken of. Then those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and use the weapons for fuel and burn them up--the small and large shields, the bows and arrows, the war clubs and spears. For seven years they will use them for fuel. They will not need to gather wood from the fields or cut it from the forests, because they will use the weapons for fuel. And they will plunder those who plundered them and loot those who looted them, declares the Sovereign LORD.” (Ezekiel 39:8-10)

The appearance of this seven-year period in the aftermath of the Magog invasion should make it perfectly clear that the beginning of the Day of the Lord *precedes* the signing of the 70th Week covenant. It is simply absurd to think that the Day of the Lord could begin sometime *after* the 70th Week has already begun, because this would mean that these captured weapons are burned for fuel after the earth has been miraculously renovated and the Messianic Kingdom of peace and prosperity has begun. In fact, Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3 both state that any weapons that enter into the Millennial Kingdom will not be used as fuel, but will instead be turned into agricultural equipment!

This common-sense chronological conclusion is also arrived at by author Doug Berner in his authoritative study on the Magog invasion, ***The Silence Is Broken!***, recently published in the summer of 2006. Berner analyzes Ezekiel 38-39 from virtually every conceivable perspective and he agrees that the Day of the Lord begins as a result of God’s desire to protect His people Israel. Furthermore, he also concludes that the 70th Week covenant of Daniel 9:27 cannot be connected with the first Seal of Revelation, and can only be signed sometime *after* the first Trumpet judgment of Revelation in the aftermath of the destruction of the Magog Alliance.

Conclusion

We have now provided conclusive answers for the “When, How and Why?” of the **Day of the Lord**. It will begin *within* the sixth Seal of Revelation sometime *before* the signing of the 70th Week Covenant; it will begin with the catastrophic shaking of the earth; and it will begin because of God’s desire to protect Israel from her enemies.

The next and final article of this series will focus on the relationship between the Church and the Day of the Lord. Isaiah 30:30 says that “The LORD will cause men *to hear his majestic voice*” at the beginning of the Day of the Lord. The Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 connects the “*trumpet call of God*” with the resurrection and rapture of the Church. The next article will take a fresh look at this glorious event, confirm its relationship to the Day of the Lord, and find its proper place in the book of Revelation.

The Day of the Lord: When, How and Why?

Part Three – God Rescues His Bride

“Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.” (Luke 21:36)

Introduction

In the first two parts of this series we discovered that the Day of the Lord begins *within* the sixth Seal but prior to the seven years of the 70th Week of Daniel, taking the form of the shaking of the entire earth for the ultimate purpose of protecting Israel. In this final article of our series we will examine how the rapture and resurrection of the Church is related to this great ‘Day.’

The 24 Elders: A Closer Look

The predominant Pre-Trib chronology places both the beginning of the 70th Week and the beginning of the Day of the Lord at the opening of the first Seal of Revelation. It is clear from Scripture that the Church is not destined to experience the Day of the Lord, and this has led to the Pre-Trib conclusion that the Twenty-Four Elders in heaven, who are introduced *before* the Seals are opened, must be representative of the raptured and resurrected Church, the Bride of Christ. When it comes to identifying the Church in Revelation this *would* be a possible answer, except for one major problem: *Where is Jesus?*

The Apostle Paul is clear that Jesus will play the leading role in the events surrounding the resurrection and rapture of the Church, and he emphasizes that role in his letter to the Thessalonians:

“We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17)

Paul teaches that according to the Lord’s own word Jesus will “come down from heaven,” give a “loud command” to raise the dead, and then gather the living up to meet “with them in the clouds.” This is when we will also “meet the Lord in the air,” after which we will “be with the Lord forever.” Another text that physically describes Jesus and the rapture is in Luke’s portion of the Olivet Discourse:

“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.” (Luke 21:34-36)

From the Lord’s own word we know that those who watch and pray and escape the dangers of the unexpected day will “stand before the Son of Man.” Yet when we turn to the Twenty-Four Elders they are not standing, but sitting (Revelation 4:4), and more importantly, Jesus is nowhere to be found!

The heavenly scene described in Revelation 4 at the beginning of John’s vision includes God the Father, the Twenty-Four Elders, the Seven Spirits of God, and the Four Living Creatures, *but there is no Jesus*. In fact, John’s vision lasts for an indeterminate length of time during which the whole universe is searched for someone who is worthy to open the seven-sealed Scroll, but “no one was found” (Revelation 5:4).

This is odd because as early as Acts 7:55 we have testimony that Jesus occupies a position “at the right hand of God” in heaven. This fact is also mentioned by Paul in Romans 8:34 and Colossians 3:1, as well as by Peter in 1 Peter 3:22 and in Hebrews 10:12. With all of this testimony that Jesus stands *right now* at the **right hand** of God in heaven, then how can the missing Jesus be accounted for, if the Twenty-Four Elders represent the resurrected and raptured Church? Does it make any sense that Jesus would descend from heaven, gather the Church, return to heaven with the Church, and then disappear to an unsearchable place outside of the universe for a period of time prior to returning to heaven and taking the seven-sealed Scroll? Doesn’t Paul forbid this nonsensical hypothetical scenario when he says that after the rapture the Church “will be with the Lord forever”? The only explanation that makes sense to me is that Revelation 4-5 describes the heavenly scene leading up to and just after the ascension of Jesus in Acts 1:9. Jesus became worthy to take the Scroll when He was slain for the sins of the world, which is explained within the song that is sung by the inhabitants of heaven:

“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God...” (Revelation 5:9)

If this is true then the search for someone worthy to open the scroll in Revelation 5:3-4 must have taken place before the crucifixion. Then in verse five we are told that Jesus has triumphed; in verse six we see that Jesus has ascended to heaven; and then in verse seven His first act is to approach the **right hand** of God the Father and take the Scroll. Jesus has been at the Father’s right hand for almost two thousand years now, and Jesus will be there after He briefly descends to rescue His Bride from the Day of the Lord. Jesus will not be inexplicably missing for any period of time while His Bride is a guest in His Father’s house, and therefore the Twenty-Four Elders cannot be representative of the Church.

The Great Multitude: A Second Look

This study has endeavored to develop a new timeline of events for the early stages of the Apocalypse. In the first article it was argued that the Day of the Lord begins *within* the sixth Seal, rather than at the first Seal. The second article then connected the “sudden destruction” of the sixth Seal with the Magog invasion of Ezekiel 38-39, leading to the conclusion that the 70th Week can only begin sometime *after* the first Trumpet judgment. With this perspective in mind we can now look with fresh eyes at the events surrounding the sixth Seal for evidence of the Pre-Trib resurrection and rapture of the Church.

The evidence is obvious: the resurrected and raptured Church is the Great Multitude of Revelation 7:9-17. If we take the two rapture texts that *did not* fit the Twenty-Four Elders (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 and Luke 21:34-36) and compare them with the Great Multitude, we find a *perfect fit*. Paul teaches that Jesus will be responsible for the resurrection and rapture of the Church, and in Revelation we see that Jesus, alongside God the Father, is at the center of the Great Multitude’s attention. As Jesus Himself predicted, this is the group that watched and prayed, and was able to escape the terrible events of the Day of the Lord to “stand before the Son of Man.”

“After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’” (Revelation 7:9-10)

“Out of the Great Tribulation”

There is much more evidence for identifying the Great Multitude as the Church, but first we must address a counter-argument. The primary reason why the Great Multitude is *eliminated* from consideration when it comes to identifying the Church in a Pre-Trib context is the fact that they are described in 7:14 as “they who have come out of the great tribulation.” From this text, and from the Pre-Trib assumption that the first Seal marks the beginning of the seven-year tribulation, it is believed that this group has *experienced* at least a portion of the great tribulation, and therefore cannot be the Church.

The Bible contains only three references to “great tribulation” in a prophetic context: Matthew 24:21, Revelation 2:22, and Revelation 7:14. The first refers to the *second half* of the 70th Week, but with an explanation that this period is actually the time

of “greatest tribulation”; the second contains a threat against the wicked (“Repent, or you will be cast into great tribulation!”) which also implies a promise to those who do “repent.” Such a promise is given explicitly in Revelation 3:10,

“Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.”

The wicked are warned to repent or they will be “cast into great tribulation,” while the faithful are promised that they will be “kept from” (*tereo ek*) the world’s “hour of trial.” Revelation 7:14 is the third reference to “great tribulation” and from it we see that the Great Multitude fulfills the implied promise of Revelation 2:22 and the explicit promise of 3:10. They are the group that has “come away from” (*erxomenoi ek*) the great tribulation. The Greek word *ek* (Strong’s Concordance: “out of,” “from,” “by,” or “away from”) does not demand that the Great Multitude *experienced* the great tribulation. A similar use of the word *ek* appears in the Greek Septuagint translation of Genesis 19:29, translated here in English:

“So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of (*ek*) the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot lived.”

Lot escaped “out of” the catastrophe that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, but he did not *experience* the burning sulfur that rained down from heaven. (The death of Lot’s wife was a separate judgment from God). Just as Lot was warned and escaped from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, so will the Church be rescued “away from” or “out of” the “great tribulation.” The rapture of the Church is a “rescue” (Luke 21:36) and an “escape” (1 Thessalonians 1:10). The Great Multitude of Revelation 7:9-17 is a picture of the Church that has “come out of the great tribulation” right as it begins, in the nick of time!

Salvation or Wrath?

The question of whether or not the Great Multitude has experienced the “great tribulation” is actually a distraction. With only three references in the Bible it is hard to come to a concrete definition of the term anyway. On the other hand, there are literally scores of references to the “Day of the Lord” in the Bible, and so the key question should really be whether or not the Great Multitude has experienced any of the *Day of the Lord*. To answer this question let’s return to Paul’s definitive passage on that subject:

“Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to *suffer wrath* but to *receive salvation* through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 5:1-9)

The final verse of this passage says it all: believers are promised salvation from God’s wrath, while unbelievers can expect to face God’s wrath. After the sixth Seal is opened, and after the Day of the Lord begins with the great shaking of the earth, John reports an audible response from two different groups. One group has been rescued to heaven, while the other is left behind on earth; one has **received salvation** and rejoices, while the other **suffers wrath** and cries out in fear and terror:

Salvation for the Bride of Christ: “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count... And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘*Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.*’” (7:9-10)

Wrath for everyone else: “Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called 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?*” (6:15-17)

The Firstfruits of Israel

The *beginning* of the Day of the Lord is also the *end* of the Church Age, after which God will turn His attention to Israel. It is no coincidence that the *third group* mentioned after the opening of the sixth Seal, in addition to the Church and the mass of unbelievers on earth, is in fact Israel. The sealing of the 144,000 will be the first act of grace that God bestows upon Israel after the end of the Church Age, and in Revelation 14:4 it is said of them that “They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb.”

Describing the 144,000 as “firstfruits” makes sense once it is understood that the 144,000 will be the *very first* human beings to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ after the rapture of the Church, at a time when the earth is briefly populated

entirely with unbelievers. The salvation of these Jews will be similar to the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus, but 144,000 times over. Together with the Two Witnesses they will be the “teachers” mentioned by the prophet Isaiah in connection with the coming of the Day of the Lord:

“Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’” (Isaiah 30:20-21)

The Great Earthquake Resurrection

And now this brings us to one of the most fascinating elements of the sixth Seal rapture of the Church. Recall that Paul is clear that the rapture of the living will first be preceded by the resurrection of the “dead in Christ.” Millions and even billions of Christian souls from throughout the world and from throughout the Church Age will receive new immortal bodies and be united with Christ and the Church in the sky above the earth.

One of the most important books ever written on the subject of the resurrection of the Church appeared in 2005. Written by Bible scholar David Lowe, it is entitled ***Earthquake Resurrection - Supernatural Catalyst for the Coming Global Catastrophe***. Lowe’s in-depth study has led him to the same conclusions regarding the prophetic timeline that are put forth in this study. (His book also taught me about the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of God in Revelation 4-5 that was mentioned earlier in this article). Lowe points out that there are twelve Biblical accounts of resurrections from the dead. Of these twelve, nine of them are simply resurrections back into mortal bodies, while three of these accounts describe resurrections into *immortal* bodies. In each of these cases of *resurrection to immortality* the resurrection is accompanied by an **earthquake**. This happens at the resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28:2-7); at the resurrection of the “many saints” that appeared after Jesus’ resurrection (Matthew 27:51-53); and at the resurrection of the Two Witnesses of Revelation (11:11-13). If earthquakes are indeed somehow directly and supernaturally connected to the phenomenon of *resurrection to immortality*, then what does that mean for this world when the dead in Christ from throughout the world and from throughout time are raised to immortal bodies at that profound moment prior to the onset of the Day of the Lord? David Lowe comments on this possibility:

“If the resurrection power to raise Jesus Christ, the “many saints”, and the two witnesses caused the earthquakes that were associated with each of their resurrections, then what about the future resurrection of the dead in Christ? Consider the explosive magnitude of an exponentially larger resurrection of the dead in Christ in the future. Many millions of those who have died in covenant with Jesus Christ throughout history will be instantaneously and simultaneously resurrected from the dead and transformed to immortality with the same dynamic power... With all this supernatural activity happening in a moment's time, might it be possible that severe geological activity will result, causing a magnetic disturbance and changes to the structure of earth's surface? If this magnitude of energy is unleashed worldwide at the resurrection event, when the Lord's shout of command and the trumpet sound of God's voice awakens the dead in Christ, then a global shaking would certainly result.” (p.99)

David Lowe has continued his investigation of this great shaking of the earth at the beginning of the Day of the Lord in his second book, ***THEN HIS VOICE SHOOK THE EARTH... Mount Sinai, the Trumpet of God, and the Resurrection of the Dead in Christ***, which has just been published and is available for the first time here in Dallas. It focuses on the mystery of the “last trumpet” of 1 Corinthians 15:52, and shows how the “trumpet call of God” relates directly to the *sixth Seal resurrection and rapture of the Church*, and subsequent shaking of the earth.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Back in 1995 Pastor John Abent of Berlin, Maryland, published a book on Bible prophecy called ***Signs in the Heavens: Biblical Prophecy and Astronomy***. To my knowledge he is the first Bible scholar to put forth a comprehensive prophetic timeline that involves a *Pre-Trib sixth Seal rapture of the Church*. In a conversation that I had with him he commented on the duration of the Day of the Lord in Revelation, saying that the sixth Seal and seventh Bowl (vial) judgments “form a giant inclusio in the Greek. With the sixth seal open we are told that the great Day of God's/the Lamb's wrath ‘has come’ and with the seventh vial we are told ‘it is done.’ These stand out like two grammatical parentheses. Thus the judgments of the Day of the Lord begin with the sixth seal and end with the seventh vial judgment.”

If this timeline is correct and the Day of the Lord begins within the sixth Seal, with the 70th Week coming after that, then what does that mean for our understanding of the infamous Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse? If the first Seal does not represent the Antichrist, then who or what can it represent? The answers to these questions have yet to be conclusively solved, although several good theories exist.

Pastor Abent takes the historicist approach and believes that the first Seal represents the Holy Spirit. In the description of the first Seal the mounted figure is said to ride out “as a conqueror bent on conquest.” The Greek word translated as “conquer” is *nikao*. This exact same word is translated as “overcome” exactly seven other times in Revelation, once within each letter to the

seven Churches. Clearly the Church will “overcome” or “conquer” with the power of the Holy Spirit, which was sent to believers forty days after Christ’s *ascension to heaven*.

The historicist approach is also taken by Saint Victorinus (d.304 AD) who wrote the earliest full commentary on the book of Revelation that is still in existence today (*Commentarius In Apocalypsin*). He equates the first Seal with the Holy Spirit and he also states that the sixth Seal marks the beginning of “the final persecution.”

David Lowe favors the historicist approach as well, but he views all of the first four Horsemen as *negative* judgments. Within his well thought out presentation the first Seal represents the “spirit of the Antichrist,” which the Apostle John said “is already in the world” (1 John 4:3).

On the other hand, Doug Berner does not find the historicist approach convincing, and within his entirely **futurist** perspective he views all of the Seals as being opened one after the other in only a matter of moments. He believes that Revelation 5 does not describe the ascension of Christ but rather the scene in heaven “when God the Father has made God’s enemies Christ’s footstool, thus granting Christ the authority to render judgment upon them.” In this way the “powers” or “judgments” associated with the early Seals apply to the entire Day of the Lord. However, as far as the earth is concerned, Berner’s belief is that God’s silence is broken after the opening of the sixth Seal.

In addition to the “historicist” and “futurist” perspective of the early Seals there is also the “birthpangs” perspective. Many scholars have commented on the similarities and parallels between the first four Seals and the “birthpangs” mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 24:4-8. In the past Victorinus commented on it and connected it with his historicist interpretation of the early Seals. Recently Pre-Wrath scholars Marvin Rosenthal and Robert Van Kampen utilized these parallels in presenting their futurist interpretation, and Dr. Thomas Ice does the same thing in presenting his futurist Pre-Trib interpretation.

The problem that I see with combining the “birthpangs” with a futurist interpretation of the early Seals, is that these “birthpangs” are then viewed as being fulfilled within the 70th Week of Daniel. For instance, Ice believes that the 70th Week starts with Matthew 24:4. I respectfully disagree. I think the “birthpangs” were mentioned by Jesus as a metaphor for the end-times spiritual rebirth of Israel, yet they are signs that will warn *the Church* of the approaching Day of the Lord within which this rebirth will take place. If there are no “birthpangs” for the Church to identify, then why does Jesus continually exhort his listeners to “keep watch” in the Olivet Discourse? Many scholars argue that the Olivet Discourse was not given to the Church, but if this is true then why did Paul borrow so heavily from the Olivet Discourse in his message to the Church in 1 Thessalonians 5? Also, why does Jesus give the following warning to the Church at Sardis that includes allusions to both the Olivet Discourse and 1 Thessalonians 5?

“But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.” (Revelation 3:3)

What happens to this Church if they *do* wake up? Obviously, they will not be surprised by the “coming” of Jesus, and they *will* know the time. They will not know the exact day or hour, *but they will not be surprised*. It is in pondering these questions that I have concluded that the “birthpangs” are indeed directly related to the early Seals, and both the “birthpangs” of Matthew 24:4-8 and the first five Seals of Revelation most likely refer to events that take place *before* the rapture of the Church and *before* the 70th Week of Daniel. As far as the Church is concerned they are the “birthpangs” that warn of the approach of the Day of the Lord.

Conclusion

This completes our study that has attempted to answer the questions of “When, How and Why?” concerning the great and terrible Day of the Lord. In the first two articles we provided evidence that this Day begins with the shaking of the earth after the sixth Seal is opened, which is a judgment from God for the ultimate purpose of saving Israel and making Himself known to Israel and the nations of the world. By connecting this Day with the events portrayed in Ezekiel 38-39 we also provided evidence that the beginning of the Day of the Lord precedes the 70th Week. In this final article we addressed the subject of the rapture and resurrection of the Church, finding evidence for that event right where it was to be expected, in connection with the sixth Seal of Revelation and the shaking of the earth that marks the beginning of the great and terrible Day of the Lord. *May God continue to give us wisdom and understanding to prepare for our Savior’s soon return. For His is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Peter D. Goodgame
Kailua, Hawaii