

THE RED MOON RAPTURE

by **Peter Goodgame**

It is my belief that this new prophetic model answers a number of questions that remain unanswered within pre-tribulationism, and it corrects the many flaws that exist within the chronology of the pre-wrath model.

- The beginning of the Day of the Lord within Revelation is pinpointed and proven using a number of texts. The Day of the Lord will begin with a catastrophic global Polar Shift.

- Events and signs immediately after the Rapture are clearly shown. God will not delay his wrath once his people are taken.

- The beginning of the Seventieth Week of Daniel is pinpointed within Revelation and cross-referenced with Old Testament texts.

- The mission of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse is identified. They are intimately related to each other, and unique from the other judgements that are found in Revelation.

The best way I have found to present my model is by offering it as a conclusion that is built step-by-step using a series of premises. We begin now with the most commonly accepted premises, and then we will progress to the more provocative and unique ideas that I wish to convey. This new prophetic model is dependent on each of these premises being correct. If one of these premises are objected to, then please at least understand the logic and the Biblical basis behind it, at least giving it the temporary benefit of the doubt before continuing to the next one. Thank you for your patience and God bless,

1

THE SEVENTIETH WEEK OF DANIEL WILL OCCUR IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST.

This prophecy can be found in Daniel 9:24-27. This final seven year period will begin when a future Roman leader "confirms a covenant" involving the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem.

2

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION IS SET UP PRECISELY AT THE MIDPOINT OF THE SEVENTIETH WEEK.

At this time the Roman leader will erect an image of the Antichrist in the Holy Place of the rebuilt Jewish Temple. This idol is referred to as the "Abomination of Desolation" by Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:15-21, Mark 13:14-19) and the prophet Daniel (9:27, 11:31). This event divides the seven year period of the 70th Week into two halves of exactly three and a half years each. Each 3.5 year half is referred to throughout scripture as "a time, times, and half a time" (Daniel 7:25, 12:7, Revelation 12:14), "forty-two months" (Revelation 11:2, 13:5), or "1260 days" (Revelation 11:3, 12:6). The Bible's prophetic year is exactly 360 days long.

3

THE SEALS, TRUMPETS AND BOWLS ARE ENACTED IN STRICT CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE.

The book of Revelation contains three sets of judgements: the seven seal judgements, the seven trumpet judgements, and the seven bowl judgements. My model follows a strict sequential interpretation of the three sets of judgements: first the seals are opened, then the trumpets are blown and lastly the bowls are poured out. Others, such as some pre-trib and generally all post-trib models, follow a simultaneous method of interpretation and view the seals, trumpets and bowls as being unleashed at the same time, with a confusing muddle of judgements that become impossible to place in any coherent order. My model is dependent on the chronology as given plainly within Revelation. I believe that this premise is generally agreed with, but if not I have written a paper supporting it at www.redmoonrising.com/sequence.htm.

4

THE TWO WITNESSES MINISTER ENTIRELY WITHIN THE FIRST HALF OF THE SEVENTIETH WEEK.

The ministry of the Two Witnesses (Revelation 11:3-13) is key to understanding the placement of the seal, trumpet and bowl judgements in relation to the 70th Week. These witnesses minister for 1260 days, and it can be shown beyond a reasonable doubt that this corresponds to the first half of the 70th Week. Their ministry ends precisely at the midpoint of the 70th Week when the Antichrist is given power over the saints (Daniel 7:25, Revelation 13:5-10), first exercising his power by killing the Two Witnesses. I have written a paper at www.redmoonrising.com/twowitnesses.htm defending this premise. If this premise is correct then it combines with the next to effectively demolish the chronology put forth in pre-wrath models.

5

THE INVASION OF THE SIXTH TRUMPET JUDGEMENT ENDS THREE AND A HALF DAYS AFTER THE MIDPOINT OF THE SEVENTIETH WEEK.

Revelation 8:13 introduces the "Three Woes," which correspond to the 5th, 6th and 7th trumpet judgements. The Two Witnesses are resurrected three and a half days after they are killed at the midpoint of the 70th Week. This is immediately

followed by an earthquake that strikes the city of Jerusalem, and then Revelation 11:14 reads, "The second woe has passed..." This shows that the effects of the sixth trumpet judgement come to an end three and a half days after the midpoint of the 70th Week. This is evidence that the judgements of the seven seals and first six trumpets all begin prior to this point, while the seventh trumpet and the seven bowls all occur in the last half of the 70th Week. This premise is very important in developing a proper chronology in that it creates a solid benchmark within Revelation near the middle of the 70th Week.

And now we come to a rather unique premise that I have arrived at over the course of my studies:

6

THE DAY OF THE LORD BEGINS WITH THE POLAR SHIFT EVENT OF THE SIXTH SEAL.

The Bible gives a number of indicators that allow us to recognize the precise beginning of the Day of the Lord. There are several events which must PRECEDE the Day of the Lord:

- The coming of Elijah (Malachi 4:5).
- The "falling away" and the revealing of the man of sin (2 Thessalonians 2:3).
- The darkening of the sun and the moon turning red like blood (Joel 2:31).

It is this last prophecy that is most important in identifying the beginning of the Day of the Lord within Revelation. Aside from Revelation, Joel is the only prophet that made the prediction of a blood red moon. This prophecy appears nowhere else in Scripture. In the book of Revelation, we find that the sixth seal brings forth the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. This is the pattern of scripture, that almost every judgement or event found within Revelation was also predicted by Old Testament prophets. Joel was the only prophet to predict a blood red moon, and Revelation is the only place where this prediction is shown to be fulfilled. They are two references to the same event and to argue otherwise goes against God's pattern and brings forth unnecessary confusion.

The sixth seal contains within it five distinct events:

1. An earthquake
2. The sun is darkened
3. The moon turns blood red
4. A shower of falling stars
5. A global/cosmic disturbance (Polar Shift)

The second and third events, according to Joel, must PRECEDE the Day of the Lord, therefore the Day of the Lord must begin after the sixth seal is opened and AFTER Revelation 6:12. Revelation 6:14-17 then describes the fifth event that takes place after the sixth seal is opened, as well as mankind's reaction to it,

"And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, 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 that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the GREAT DAY OF HIS WRATH IS COME; and who shall be able to stand?" KJV

This catastrophic global event is recognized by the people of the earth as the beginning of the great day of God's wrath, otherwise known as the Day of the Lord. Compare this passage with Isaiah's prophecy of the same event in 2:12,19-21,

"For the DAY OF THE LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low... And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth." KJV

Again, Revelation correlates with an Old Testament prophecy giving two descriptions of the same event. Both describe it as a Day of the Lord event, both describe people reacting to it by running in fear to the caves, and both describe humanity recognizing it as an example of God's majesty or wrath. We can identify this event in contemporary terms by looking closely at the descriptions. Revelation describes this event as one that causes the heavens to shift overhead and every mountain and island to move. Certainly for every mountain and island to move the entire planet must also move. Isaiah describes this event as one when God "ariseth to shake terribly the earth." Together these descriptions tell us that the great Day of the Lord begins with a major shaking of this planet earth by the hand of God Almighty. This POLAR SHIFT event causes the earth to shake, causes mountains and islands to change position (relative to our fixed latitude and longitude measurements), and causes the constellations in the sky to appear to change position overhead as well. Celestial navigation must now be learned again from scratch, and climates around the world will radically change.

Let us examine again the sequence of events that takes place after the sixth seal is opened, with my comments in brackets,

"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood [Joel 2:31 predicted that this would occur BEFORE the Day of the Lord]; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places [Polar Shift]. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains [Isaiah 2:12,19-21 describes this as an event occurring within the Day of the Lord]; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? [The people of the earth themselves identify this as the beginning of the Day of the Lord]" Revelation 6:12-17 KJV

Again, the premise of this section is that the Day of the Lord begins with the polar shift event of the sixth seal. This premise will be objected to by those holding to the traditional pre-trib view as well as by those who support the standard pre-wrath view.

Most pre-trib views believe that the Day of the Lord begins prior to the opening of the first seal. However, if Joel's red moon is the same as the sixth seal's red moon, then this view is wrong. For this reason scholars such as Fruchtenbaum believe that Joel's red moon occurs prior to the first seal, and that the red moon of the sixth seal is never mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. There must be two separate red moons for the Day of the Lord to begin prior to the first seal. The first would be unmentioned in Revelation, fulfilling Joel and coming before the first seal, and the second would be the sixth seal red moon, unmentioned anywhere else in Scripture. In my view this understanding goes against the pattern of Scripture and I believe that Joel's red moon IS the red moon of the sixth seal.

The pre-wrath view, as put forth by Rosenthal, is more complicated. He believes that the Day of the Lord begins with the seventh seal, and that the people of the earth reacting in fear and terror at the sixth seal are acting IN ANTICIPATION of the seventh seal (p.167), rather than REACTING to the global/cosmic disturbance that they have just experienced. Rosenthal's main problem is that he tries to correlate the sixth seal events with the events of Matthew 24:29, but more on this error later. Rosenthal, by attempting to prove that the Day of the Lord begins with the seventh seal, tries to make use of the Greek aorist tense of the verb "is come" found in Revelation 6:17, "For the great day of his wrath is come..." Rosenthal shows that in some isolated cases this tense can signify future tense, making the text mean something like, "For the great day of his wrath is coming..." However, the context of the verb within the passage makes it abundantly clear that the people of the earth are reacting to a past event rather than anticipating a future event. Isaiah 2 clarifies this even further by placing the shaking of the earth within the Day of the Lord. The people of the earth, unbelievers, are reacting to God's wrath, not anticipating it. Furthermore, 1 Thessalonians 5:2 states that the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night for unbelievers, so Rosenthal's position that they cry out in anticipation of it becomes even shakier. I admire him as a scholar and credit him for supplying me with many ideas, but I must disagree with him on this point. My position is that the sixth seal contains within it the polar shift judgement, which marks the beginning of the Day of the Lord.

7

THE SEVENTIETH WEEK BEGINS AFTER THE FIRST TRUMPET JUDGEMENT

Here again is a rather unique premise. The traditional pre-trib views, along with pre-wrath and post-trib views, almost universally hold that the 70th Week begins with, or prior to, the opening of the first seal.

My premise here hinges on the Magog invasion of Ezekiel 38-39. My view is that this invasion must take place prior to the 70th Week, and I support this with a couple of points:

First, in the aftermath of this invasion, Ezekiel 39:9 states that Israel will use the captured weapons for fuel for seven years. Certainly captured weapons of war will not be used as a fuel source after Jesus Christ returns, makes the earth new again, and establishes His Messianic Kingdom. For this reason, the seven years of burning weapons must end at or before the Second Coming. Also notice that we are not told that precisely seven years worth of weapons are captured, perhaps ten or even fifteen years worth of weapons are captured, but we are told that these weapons will cease to be used as a fuel source after exactly seven years. I believe that this seven years corresponds precisely with the 70th Week, and that the 70th Week is initiated, through the Roman leader with Israel, in the immediate aftermath of the Magog invasion.

Secondly, if the Magog invasion were to take place within the 70th Week, then this would mean that it would take place after Israel has also initiated a program to rebuild the Temple and renew the sacrifices to their God. Ezekiel indicates that Israel's attitude at the time of the invasion is not one that is characterized by any great amount of piety. On the contrary, Ezekiel 39:7 indicates that God initiates this invasion to make His holy name known to His people, and to stop them from "polluting" His name. Israel's liberal, secular attitude is not one that would desire to see a rebuilt national Temple, and for this reason I believe Israel begins to recognize and turn back to their God only after the Magog invasion, which then results in the covenant of the 70th Week and the rebuilding of the Temple.

The Magog invasion takes place prior to the 70th Week, which then begins in the immediate aftermath.

Having stated this minor premise let us now return to the major premise. It was arrived at by closely examining the series of judgements that occur as a result of, or in connection with, the Magog invasion, and by comparing these judgements with the initial judgements of Revelation. Ezekiel 38:18-19 introduces the judgements that come from God,

"And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my WRATH have I spoken..."

The judgements which come can then be described as God's wrath,

"... surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground." verses 19-20

The first event is a great "shaking" that occurs in Israel, but it is followed by an even greater event which affects every man and even every living thing on the face of the earth. This second event can be described as a global outpouring of God's wrath. Only after these initial judgements does God then turn his attention to the invading armies themselves,

"And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord." verses 21-23

The first causes the soldiers of the Magog invasion to turn against each other, and the second is described as a bloody pestilence of "hailstones, fire and brimstone." However, God's judgement also extends beyond just the invaders themselves,

"Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God. And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the Lord." Ezekiel 39:4-6

The nation of Magog itself, as well as the enigmatic "*isles*" also feel the force of this judgement. The sequence of events then are:

1. A great shaking in Israel
2. A global disturbance that grabs the attention of everyone on earth, causing all to shake at the presence of God. Then soon after:
3. A bloody pestilence of hail, fire and brimstone, the fire also encompassing Russia and the Isles.

I believe this same sequence of events is shown in the early events of Revelation, specifically with the sixth seal and first trumpet judgements:

1. Revelation 6:12, "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake..."
2. 6:14-17, "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, 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 that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"
3. 8:7, "The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up."

In Revelation and Ezekiel the first event is similar in that Ezekiel refers to it as a "great shaking" in Israel ("great earthquake" in the NIV), and Revelation calls it a "great earthquake." The second event is similar in that they both describe a global disturbance which causes all men to take notice. Ezekiel says that all men will shake at God's presence, while Revelation records that all men ask to be hidden from the face of God. In Revelation men ask for the mountains and rocks to fall on them, while in Ezekiel the mountains and steep places fall down, and every wall falls, perhaps granting man's request. Ezekiel records this as an outpouring of God's wrath, and in Revelation the unbelievers cry out that it is indeed the wrath of God. The third event is similar in that both texts refer to blood, fire and hailstones. Ezekiel records that this plague is "rained down," while Revelation records it is "cast upon" the earth. The Ezekiel plague of fire that includes Magog (Russia), and the Isles (the Mediterranean basin?), could equal the scale of the fire of Revelation that burns up one third of the earth at the first trumpet.

Ezekiel may allow for a brief span of time between the global disturbance of 38:20 and the judgements that fall on the invading armies in 38:21. Revelation indicates that there is a brief span of time after the sixth seal when the 144,000 are sealed, then at the seventh seal there is a half hour interlude, after which the first trumpet bombardment begins.

Certainly the judgements which come about in connection with the Magog invasion include global judgements which are characterized as God's wrath. Certainly the rapture will take place prior to the global outpouring of God's wrath. In Ezekiel and Revelation we have two very similar sequences of judgements. Is this similar sequence repeated twice, one after the other, both of them after the rapture, or, as I believe, can it be determined beyond a reasonable doubt that Ezekiel and Revelation both offer descriptions of the very same sequence of judgements? If the 70th Week begins after the Magog invasion is destroyed, and the Magog invasion is destroyed as a result of the first trumpet bombardment, then we can conclude that the 70th Week does not even begin until after the first trumpet is blown and it's effects are felt.

The fifth seal also offers some support for a late start for the 70th Week. This support can be found within the question that is asked of God by the deceased martyrs who are under the altar.

At the present time believers, living or dead, do not have an exact idea of how much time is left until Jesus Christ returns and judges the people of the earth. However, once the future Roman leader confirms the covenant allowing Israel to rebuild the Temple, believers can be satisfied to know that the final judgement of the earth is only seven years away. Here is the question asked by the fifth seal martyrs,

"How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Revelation 6:10

It seems apparent that these martyrs are people who have been killed prior to the 70th Week, else they would have known the general answer to this question and would not have asked it. The answer given to these martyrs is not precise, it is simply to rest yet for a little while, and then the judgement will occur after all of the martyrs have come in. The question that they ask, as well as the vague answer, is evidence that the 70th Week begins sometime after the fifth seal.

The texts above, and the interpretations drawn from them, all provide support for the premise that the Seventieth Week of Daniel does not begin until after the first trumpet judgement.

8

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE REPRESENT THE OUTPOURING OF GOD'S PASSIVE WRATH AS IT IS FELT THROUGHOUT THE END-TIMES.

To understand this premise it is necessary to introduce to the reader a portion of the "war of words" that has taken place between pre-trib scholars and pre-wrath scholars. After Rosenthal published his book, "The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church," a scathing review of it was then published by Fruchtenbaum. One of the positions that Rosenthal took was separating the "Tribulation" of the first six seals from the "Day of the Lord" of the seventh and beyond. He attempted to show how the first period, which he concluded the Church must endure, did not include God's wrath, and that God's wrath was held back until the period of the "Day of the Lord." Rosenthal referred to the Tribulation period as a time of "man's wrath against man." He said that the Antichrist, warfare, famine, death and martyrdom, which are indicated in the first five seals, are not judgements that come from God. Fruchtenbaum countered this position by referring to Ezekiel 14:21, which states that God does send judgements of war, famine, beasts and pestilence, and by differentiating between God's active wrath versus His passive wrath. There are some judgements which God actively initiates, such as the judgements surrounding the Magog invasion, and then there are others which He passively allows, such as warfare, famine, persecution, etc.

In examining the different views on the four horsemen of the first four seals I came to agree with Fruchtenbaum that they do represent God's wrath. They are judgements from God which are conferred upon the Four Horsemen as Jesus opens the seals. However, they represent passive forms of judgement, or passive forms of God's wrath. This is what separates the four horsemen from most of the remaining seals, trumpets and bowls, which are almost all active judgements and active demonstrations of God's wrath. And they should be separate, because of the obvious imagery associated with them. They are separate and unique, yet closely related to each other.

Another observation regarding the four horsemen is that at least two of them are given a specific POWER. The second is given POWER to take peace from the earth and the fourth is given POWER over a fourth of the earth to kill through war, famine and beasts. Similarly, the first is given a crown and along with it comes the power to conquer the earth and the third is explained by the four creatures giving the impression that it has the power of famine.

Most scholars, pre-trib and pre-wrath alike, take a view of the four horsemen that the introduction of each represents a corresponding time period of the associated catastrophes: the first seal brings forth a period of the Antichrist's conquests, the second brings forth a period of worldwide warfare, the third brings a time period of famine, and the fourth brings forth a time during which one fourth of mankind perishes. The prophetic model that I am introducing here approaches the opening of the first four seals from a different perspective. My view is that each horseman wields a power given to it by God that represents a passive form of God's wrath, and that each horseman will use that power throughout the end-times, from the very beginning until the Second Coming. In other words, God does not record each separate war, famine, pestilence or death as it occurs during the tribulation, He simply reveals that these things take place through the symbolism of the four horsemen. To make this concept simple I will contrast it with the view held by Hal Lindsey as described in his book "Vanished Into Thin Air,"

Lindsey explains that the first seal unleashes the Antichrist who then conquers the world, bringing all nations under his authority. The second seal is then described as initiating a major war centered in the Middle East, and then Lindsey describes the third and fourth Seals on p.295,

"The Third Seal - Global Economic Catastrophe:

The opening of the third seal brings worldwide economic collapse. After war breaks out in the Middle East, oil from the Persian Gulf will be halted and worldwide economic chaos will set in. Food will become scarce and very expensive (Revelation 6:5-6).

The Fourth Seal - One Fourth of Mankind Perishes:

The opening of the fourth seal brings death to one fourth of the world's population. The enormity of this tragedy can hardly be imagined. In the space of a few months over one and a-half billion people will perish through war, famine, epidemics and breakdown of society (Revelation 6:7-8). All of these things will be the natural repercussions of the war in the Middle East."

This is the traditional view, and Lindsey believes that each seal brings forth sequential, separate time periods during which each horseman exercises his power. Does this mean that after the fifth seal there will be no more conquests, famine, warfare or death?

Here is my understanding of what each horseman represents:

First Seal- The white horseman symbolically represents the terrible conquests of the Antichrist as he attempts to take over the earth. These conquests continue even into the second half of the 70th Week and are not confined to a brief time period at the very beginning.

Second Seal- The red horseman is a representation of the terrible warfare that will take place throughout the world all the way up to the Second Coming.

Third Seal- The black horseman indicates famine which will be characteristic of the end-times.

Fourth Seal- The pale horseman represents the billions of deaths that will occur through the natural means of warfare, famine, pestilence and wild beasts prior to the Second Coming.

My view is that the first four seals are opened in a matter of moments in heaven, and as each seal is opened each horseman is granted his particular POWER. They do not immediately represent separate and distinct time periods of unique catastrophes that follow each other consecutively. Because no time parameters are given it should be understood that each power is exercised until the Second Coming. This is proven throughout Revelation, as the conquests of the Antichrist, warfare, famine and death will all continue until the end. Lindsey's contention that one fourth of the world's population perishes "in the space of a few months" is really just conjecture on his part. The four horsemen are not limited to specific time periods, whereas most of the other judgements are, having a definite beginning and then either dissipating or having a definite ending (such as the three Woes).

To make it simple, my view is that the first four seals are not DESCRIPTIVE of parallel events taking place on the earth in sequence, but rather they are PREDICTIVE of the exercising of the unique powers associated with each horseman, powers that are exercised simultaneously until the Second Coming, and powers which are a passive form of God's wrath upon this world. The breaking of the first four seals takes place in a matter of moments in heaven, arming the horsemen with their powers and setting the stage for the opening of the sixth seal, which in truth is the first time that the earth is specifically DESCRIBED as being affected by a judgement.

9

THE FIFTH SEAL PREDICTS A GREAT PERSECUTION OF SAINTS.

Here again we find a case similar to the first four seals. The fifth seal never DESCRIBES a unique time period of Christian persecution and martyrdom, but it does clearly predict one (6:11b). The fifth seal is composed of four simple parts,

1 - A PICTURE of the martyrs (v.9): "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:"

2 - THE QUESTION (v.10): "And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

3 - THE GIFT (v.11a): "And white robes were given unto every one of them;"

4 - THE ANSWER (v.11b): "and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

At the opening of the fifth seal the martyrs who cry out are believers who have died throughout the course of the Church Age, but soon they will undergo a miraculous transformation, one that relates directly to their gift of white robes. This seal does not DESCRIBE a unique time-specific period of Christian persecution, but it does PREDICT that Christians will continue to be slain all the way up until the judgement of the earth. This will be made clear shortly. This seal also sets the stage for the opening of the sixth seal.

10

THE CHANGE THAT TAKES PLACE TO BELIEVERS IN HEAVEN, COMING AT THE SAME TIME AS THE BEGINNING OF THE DAY OF THE LORD, IS EVIDENCE FOR THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH.

The sixth seal is where it all begins for this earth and for humanity as a whole. It begins with an earthquake and cosmic disturbances and then the Day of the Lord begins with God's great shaking of the earth. At the same time as the earth first feels God's wrath there is a very noticeable change that takes place to believers in heaven. At the opening of the fifth seal we see a picture of dead believers underneath the altar who at first exist without white robes. After the sixth seal we are shown a picture of a great multitude of apparently living saints, who now stand before God's throne in heaven clothed in white robes. Going from under the altar to before the throne, and from existing without white robes, to wearing white robes, at the same time as the Day of the Lord begins, is proof that the rapture has taken place.

For readers who are having a hard time following, let me explain: The rapture takes place immediately prior to the opening of the sixth seal, moments after the first five seals have been opened, but before the four horsemen have begun to exercise their recently granted powers. The rapture takes place prior to the beginning of the 70th Week and prior to the beginning of the Day

of the Lord. One of the signs that will be seen immediately after the rapture will be a supernatural occurrence of the moon turning red like blood (thus my tentative title for this prophetic model: THE RED MOON RAPTURE).

Some views would object to the rapture/resurrection occurring at this time by pointing out that the fifth seal martyrs are told to "rest" until all of the martyrs have come in. This argument can be countered by pointing out that the directive to "rest" comes within the context of the answer to their original question, which was "How long until the earth is judged?" The question is answered by telling the martyrs that they must simply wait until the persecution of saints has ended and the pre-ordained martyred dead have all come in. They are not told to rest in the sense that they must remain deceased, they are told to rest in the sense that they must wait patiently until the end of the tribulation for the judgement of the earth to take place. The NIV reads, "and they were told to WAIT a little longer," and the Greek word translated as "rest" can be interpreted in this manner, as given in Strong's Concordance. In other words, the martyred fifth seal martyrs could be resurrected, taken up out from under the altar, and given white robes, and they would still be "*resting*" or "*waiting*" until the final judgement of the earth.

If this sounds too unreasonable, and it is still maintained that the martyrs of the fifth seal must continue to "rest" under the altar in their deceased state until after the second coming, then the question arises of their relationship to the saints shown standing "before the throne" after the sixth seal. Why are some martyred dead kept under the altar, but then others are allowed to serve before the throne? Why are two supposedly identical groups of saints kept separate? Is not the transition from "under the altar" to "before the throne" indicative of a resurrection? Are the believers in heaven dead both before and after this transition, and what does the gift of white robes indicate?

The identity of the great multitude of Revelation 7:9-17 has been a very hotly debated topic between pre-trib and pre-wrath supporters. They certainly look like the Church, but the traditional pre-trib chronology places the sixth seal far past the beginning of the 70th Week, and well into the Day of the Lord. For the pre-trib view the twenty-four elders have been chosen as a better representation of the Church. However, I believe that the pre-wrath view is the correct one and that the great multitude of Revelation 7 can only be the raptured and resurrected Church:

1- This group seems to suddenly appear in heaven all at once. The rapture of the Church will be the only event that brings a great multitude into heaven at the very same time, because the souls of dead believers come into heaven one by one.

2- They are so numerous that no man can number them. They must be a large multitude indeed because the 144,000 were easily numbered. The rapture of the Church would likely include millions of believers.

3- In Revelation 5:11 the twenty-four elders mention that the death of the Lamb purchased men for God "... from every tribe and language and people and nation." This is a description of the Church. The great multitude are described in a similar manner as being "...from every nation, tribe, people and language."

4- They appear in heaven as living believers. Nowhere are they described as being simply souls or dead people. Souls of dead believers are kept in temporary holding areas such as under the altar, yet this group serves in the temple of heaven before the throne of God.

5- Revelation 7:15 mentions that "...He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." It is God the Father who is sitting on the throne. Surely this is the fulfillment of the promise that Jesus made in John 14:1-3 that He would come again and take us to His Father's house that we might live with Him (and His Father) in heaven for a time. This promise only applies to believers of the Church Age. If you become a believer after the rapture then you will never "dwell" in heaven with the Father. You will have to wait until after the millenium to live with the Father but it will not be in heaven, it will be on earth after He brings down the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1-3). The souls of the believers who die during the tribulation will be kept in heaven, but they will not be "living" or "dwelling" with God the Father. If this were the case then Jesus would have simply said in John 14, "When you die then you will go to my Father's house to live with Him." This is not the case. Jesus clearly connects living or dwelling with the Father in heaven to the rapture and His coming for the Church. Only after the rapture/resurrection will we be living in heaven with Jesus and the Father. Therefore the fact that the great multitude dwells with and serves God the Father in heaven is evidence that this group is the raptured Church.

6- 1 Thessalonians 5:9 is a promise to the Church, "For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." The appearance of this great multitude in heaven is the fruition of that promise. Notice that when they appear in heaven these saints cry out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Revelation 7:10.

7- Another group is mentioned in Revelation 19:1-3,6-8. They are also described as a "great multitude" and they also shout "Salvation and glory and power belong to our God..." Here at the end of the tribulation this group praises God and says, "For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." This fine linen is a reference to the white robes that the great multitude was wearing upon entering heaven after the sixth seal. I believe that these saints received their white robes when they were raptured from the earth prior to the sixth seal, immediately after the resurrection of the dead in Christ. Those who are wearing these white garments are referred to as "the bride" of the Lamb (19:7), which is a clear reference to the church.

The most widely held pre-trib understanding of the identity of the great multitude of Revelation 7:9-17 is that they are tribulation martyrs who represent a partial fulfillment of the prediction of trib martyrs in Rev. 6:11b. Here are the reasons why I don't agree with this view:

1. If the fifth seal martyrs and the great multitude are the same group of tribulation martyrs, then why do the fifth seal martyrs first appear without robes and the great multitude appears wearing robes? Why do the fifth seal martyrs exist under the altar and the great multitude serves before the throne? What happened to bring about this obvious change if they are dead at the opening of the fifth seal and dead when they are seen as a great multitude?

2. From the fifth seal to the events surrounding the end of the sixth must be a rather short amount of time. How does one explain the conversion and subsequent martyring of a great multitude of believers in this time? This may not be impossible, but it is certainly improbable given the fact that there are only five events within the sixth seal which seem to occur rather quickly, and which, as the text indicates, affect unbelievers.

3. John had no problem identifying the martyrs of the fifth seal as deceased "souls." If the great multitude are members of the exact same group of dead martyrs then why does John ask who they are? John's ignorance as to their identity is certainly a mystery, but if it tells us anything it tells us that they cannot be members of the same group that he easily identified beforehand.

4. From the descriptions given it is clear that at first the fifth seal martyrs are dead, yet there is no indication whatsoever that the great multitude are only "souls" or are dead believers. In fact the description of the great multitude seems to strongly indicate that they are living believers: wearing white robes, holding palm branches, before the throne, serving and dwelling with God the Father. If they are alive then obviously they cannot be tribulation martyrs who must remain dead until the resurrection of Revelation 20:4, which shows the fulfillment of the prediction of 6:11b.

A final objection that would come from the traditional pre-trib view is that the great multitude is explained as having come "out of great tribulation." If they have come OUT OF the great tribulation, then certainly they must have experienced some of it! The truth is that this is not necessarily the case. The Greek words for the English "came out of," are "erchomai ek." The word "ek" is translated as "out of, from, by, away from" by Strong's Concordance (#1537). It is entirely possible that the great multitude is taken "away from" the great tribulation, which would then make the great multitude the fulfillment of the promise given in Revelation 3:10, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." The Greek words for "keep from" are "tereo ek." Revelation 3:10 promises that faithful believers will be "kept from" (tereo ek) the hour of temptation, and Revelation 7:14 describes the great multitude as having been taken "away from" (erchomai ek) great tribulation. The rapture is described as a rescue in other texts as well such as Luke 21:36, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." And also in 1 Thessalonians 1:10, "... And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

There are also several other sources of evidence for a pre-sixth Seal Rapture:

1. After the polar shift disturbance, (the fifth event of the sixth seal), the people of the earth react. Actually, all of the people of the earth react because a list is made that certainly must include every single person on the earth, "And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?" Revelation 6:15-17

Every person on earth is either a free man or a slave, so this must include every person on the face of the earth. The nature of their reaction seems to indicate that there are no believers present, because they all react in fear and chaos and seek to hide themselves from God's wrath. Believers would not express this fear of God's wrath. Certainly after the tribulation is well underway trib believers will be subject to the effects of God's judgements upon the earth, but believers will understand this and will not react as fearfully or chaotically as these unbelievers. What we see here is the initial outpouring of God's wrath at the beginning of the Day of the Lord, and because the rapture immediately precedes this wrath the earth is left with only unbelievers, which is why the people of the earth react in this singular manner.

2. The rapture of the church comes immediately after the resurrection of the dead in Christ. However, it is not the first mass resurrection of souls. Back at the crucifixion of Christ there was also a mass resurrection of a select group of "holy people." There were two supernatural events surrounding this resurrection at the Crucifixion, which were an unexplainable darkening of the sun and a great earthquake. In Revelation the sixth seal begins with the two signs of a great earthquake and a darkening of the sun. Perhaps this is a coincidence but I believe it is something worth noting and may serve as evidence that the rapture/resurrection does immediately precede the sixth seal.

3. Pre-trib scholars have held the position that the twenty-four elders represent the raptured Church for decades. For most of them this is not even a debatable issue. My position is that the great multitude can only be the raptured Church, and that no other logical alternative exists. However, I do believe there is a logical alternative for the identity of the twenty-four elders, which I explore in a paper at <http://www.redmoonrising.com/24elders.htm> To generate interest in this debate let's examine the words of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18,

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Paul tells us that Jesus will descend from heaven and initiate the resurrection and rapture with a shout, and that after this we, the Church, will forever be with him. First we will meet Him in the air, then we will be with Him in heaven, then we will

be with Him throughout the millennial kingdom, and finally we will be with Him throughout the eternal age. Revelation does not offer a description anywhere of the Church being taken off of the earth, or of our meeting our Savior in the air, however, the great multitude is shown as it appears in heaven and this multitude is shown standing before the Lamb. Yes, the great multitude, which I believe is the Church, is always shown in the presence of our Savior. This contrasts with the situation of the twenty-four elders. They are first described in Revelation 4:4, as standing in front of God the Father, the One who sits on the throne. These elders stand by as John watches God holding in his hand the seven-sealed scroll. An angel asks in a loud voice "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" No one is found in heaven, or on earth, or even under the earth, who is able to open this book, and John weeps and weeps. Finally, an elder speaks to John and says that Jesus has been found, the only one with the power to open the book. Finally in Revelation 5:6 Jesus appears, and then he takes the book, finally beginning to break the seals after he is worshiped and praised and given glory by all who are in heaven. My point is that certainly the Church will not be in heaven during a time (from 4:4 to 5:6) in which our Lord and Savior cannot be found! For this reason the twenty-four elders must not be the Church. The paper mentioned above offers another option.

4. If the reader is still unsure as to the identity of the raptured Church within Revelation, then let us create a hypothetical description of how they would appear as they first enter heaven:

- The Church would be composed of a vast multitude of believers, coming from different nations, races, languages and regions.
- They would appear in heaven all at once, not streaming into heaven one by one as would the souls of deceased believers.
- They would be praising God and the Lamb, thanking Him for their Salvation.
- They would then serve God and the Lamb before the throne in heaven.
- They would take up residence in heaven, realizing Jesus' promise of John 14:1-3.
- They could be described as having been rescued from God's wrath which could be described as a time of great tribulation.

All of these descriptions are valid and beyond debate. This is how the Church will appear and this what it will be doing.

The traditional pre-trib model takes the position that the rapture takes place prior to the first seal, and is undescribed in Revelation. This hypothetical, undescribed Rapture would then be the FIRST appearance of a great multitude in heaven. The great multitude of Revelation 7:9-17 would then be the SECOND great multitude, coincidentally having the very same characteristics as the first great multitude! How would the first great multitude of "raptured Church saints" then interact with the second great multitude of "martyred trib saints?" Will living believers and dead believers both be serving at God's throne, praising God, dwelling with Him and nevermore thirsting because they are drinking from the waters of LIFE (Revelation 7:16-17)? Surely there is only one rapture and only one great multitude, and this great multitude is the Church, as described in Revelation 7:9-17.

SYNOPSIS

The previous ten premises, or conclusions if you prefer, all combine to create a prophetic model that is based on the following chronology:

1. In heaven, the first five seals are opened, which present the four horsemen of the apocalypse and arm them with their powers, as well as making a prediction of continued persecution of believers. These initial and brief heavenly events set the stage for the beginning of the tribulation, during which the four horsemen will exercise their powers and believers will be persecuted until the Second Coming.
2. The resurrection of the dead in Christ and the rapture of living believers takes place. We will be taken off of the earth and then we will meet the Lord in the air, before entering our heavenly residences.
3. The sixth seal is opened, which marks the beginning of the earth's tribulation. There is an earthquake, the FIRST cosmic disturbance (including the RED MOON), and then the Day of the Lord begins with a tremendous worldwide shaking of the earth.
4. After this initial outpouring of God's wrath the 144,000 are sealed and then a picture of the Church is shown in heaven.
5. The seventh seal is opened, causing a silence in heaven for half an hour followed by the beginning of the trumpet judgements.
6. The first trumpet is sounded, causing the destruction of the Magog invasion.
7. Sometime after the first trumpet the covenant of the 70th Week is confirmed, which also marks the beginning of the Two Witnesses ministry. The Temple is soon rebuilt.
8. The second through sixth trumpets are sounded in sequence after the first.
9. At the midpoint of the 70th Week the 1260 days during which the Two Witnesses were given their powers of protection expires (11:3). At this same time the Antichrist is given power over all the saints (13:5-7), and he first exercises it by killing the Two Witnesses. The abomination of desolation is then set up in the Temple.
10. Three and a half days later the Two Witnesses are resurrected, there is an earthquake in Jerusalem, and the invasion of the sixth trumpet is ended (11:11-14).
11. The seventh trumpet is then sounded near the end of the last half of the 70th Week, at a time after the Mark of the Beast has been implemented, initiating the bowl judgements which begin with a plague of sores on those who have the Mark.
12. The bowl judgements end with a supernatural darkness, falling hailstones and a FINAL cosmic/global disturbance (as also

described in Matthew 24:29).

13. The national repentance of Israel signified by a period of great mourning (Zechariah 12:10, Matthew 24:30a, Revelation 1:7).

14. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven (Matthew 24:30b).

15. The pre-millennial final gathering of Israel to the Promised Land, a huge event for Israel that was predicted by many prophets and mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 24:31, (Isaiah 11:11-12:6, 27:12-13, 43:5-7, Jeremiah 16:14-15, 23:3-4, 23:7-8, 31:7-10, Ezekiel 11:14-18, 36:24, Amos 9:14-15, Zephaniah 3:18-20, and Zechariah 10:8-12), which may also include the resurrection of Old Testament and tribulation saints and the gathering of trib believers. The Messianic Kingdom is also preceded by the wedding supper and the Sheep and Goats judgement, which conclude seventy-five days after the end of the 70th Week. The Millennium then begins.

IMMINENCE AND THE RED MOON RAPTURE

A final note must address the importance of imminence as it relates to the rapture. It is true that there is no sign that is predicted in the Bible that must precede the rapture, therefore the rapture may come at any moment and we are cautioned to always be ready. The Day of the Lord, however, WILL be preceded by a number of signs. This may appear to create a problem for this model, but the words of Jesus in Luke 17:26-29 offer an explanation,

"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until THE DAY that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But THE SAME DAY that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all."

In this text Jesus tells us that the wrath of God fell on the same day that his faithful were protected during the time of Noah and the time of Lot, and that it will be the same at the time of the rapture. My model places the rapture prior to the sixth seal, and then the preliminary events of the earthquake and cosmic disturbances take place before God's global wrath begins with the polar shift. I believe that according to Jesus' comparison there will be a maximum time of 24 hours between the rapture and the outpouring of wrath at the polar shift event. There are three signs or events which must precede the Day of the Lord: the red moon and darkened sun of Joel 2:31, the coming of Elijah of Malachi 4:5, and the revealing of the Antichrist on a public scale according to 2 Thessalonians 2:3. The first comes after the rapture, the second may come after the rapture during the 24 hour period, and the third may also take place in the hours after the rapture. Imminence is preserved within the Red Moon Rapture model and there is still no sign or event which MUST precede the rapture.