

Charts: The Tribulation: Charts 8 & 9

A WORD ABOUT THE CHARTS

Traditionally the seals and trumpets and bowls of the Tribulation (“Daniel’s Seventieth Week”) have been charted in sequential order from left to right. From this, one might infer that they and their corresponding signs or events are to be understood as occurring sequentially during the seven-year Tribulation: this happens, and then *this* happens, then this. The trumpets follow the seals, and the bowls follow the trumpets.

If it were only that simple.

We know that God does not experience time as we do. In the eyes of the God-head time, with its events, can wrap back upon itself—as seen in one of my favorite passages in Scripture. Responding to the Jewish leaders, Jesus said,

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” (John 8:56-58)

Jesus’ last statement is awkward grammar, but *wondrous* theology. The Jews got it. They got that Jesus was calling Himself God, so they started picking up stones to kill Him. [<Please look at Chart #8>](#)

My guess is that you have never seen the Tribulation charted like this. Chart #8 is an overall, organizational arrangement for the Tribulation period; there will be subsequent charts in which we will zoom into the various sections—seals, trumpets, bowls—for greater detail. But this shows the forest as a whole. Note:

- Between the sixth and seventh items of each series there is a pause, an interlude, what I have termed “parenthetical visions,” which break out of the narrative. These are shown as yellow cartouches.
- In addition to that, there is a larger sequence between the trumpets and bowls that have traditionally been placed at the midpoint of the tribulation. That placement, however, while convenient, really does not accurately categorize some of these parenthetical events. Some *do* take place at the midpoint, some do not, or they are more problematic in their placement.

- Finally, and most important, this chart more accurately reflects the relationship of the seals, trumpets, and bowls to each other. That is, rather than taking place in orderly sequence, one after the other from Seal One to Bowl Seven, **everything is actually contained within the seals**. That is, the seventh seal does not *release* the seven trumpets, but **is** the seven trumpets; likewise the seventh trumpet does not *release* the bowls of wrath, but **is** the seven bowls of wrath. Thus **all** is contained within the seals.

THE CURTAIN RISES

The apostle Paul in his second letter to the Thessalonians reveals that there is a real cause-and-effect between the rapture of the church, with the concomitant departure of the Holy Spirit, and the inauguration of the Tribulation with the entrance of the Antichrist onto the stage.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:6-10.

That, in condensed form, is a portrait of the last seven years in the life of the individual referred to as Antichrist, the beast from the sea, and the rider of the white horse released by the opening of the first seal.

Because we are in the middle of it, we do not sense that the worldwide church—consisting of every follower of Christ Jesus, indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit—effectively stifles, “restrains,” the work of Satan and his disciples on this earth. From our perspective we think it couldn’t possibly get any worse than it is; believe me, it will, and to a level of depravity and horror we cannot even imagine. That horror will be made possible by the sudden absence of righteousness on earth. As Paul states in v7, not just multiple antichrists, but *the* Antichrist will already be here working, preparing. But the Rapture will cause the curtain to rise on a seven-year period in which they, servants of Satan, will indeed be free to do their worst.

[Please turn with me to Revelation 5, and look at Chart #9>](#)

There is a scroll, or a “book” of folded sheets, in heaven. Although the word in the Greek, “*biblion*,” can refer to either, from its description in v1 this seems to be a scroll, since it is “written inside and on the back,” and “sealed up with seven seals.” Important documents in the first century—say, for example, kingly edicts or treaties—were sealed with seven seals, and only those whose names were on the seals could open them to reveal the contents. These documents would have all the seals on the outside, so that all seals would have to be broken to open the scroll at all. *This* scroll, however, seems to be different, as Chapter Six tells us. Each seal, when broken, causes different events to take place immediately, or reveals a scene from the future.

Thus I believe this describes a scroll which has multiple seals *within* the roll, rather than all outside. One breaks the first seal, which permits access to a first “page,” as it were, stopping at the next seal. Breaking that seal gives access to the next page, and so on. Or, if you prefer, seals on the top or bottom *edges* of the papyrus, prevent further unrolling of the scroll.

So what is inside this scroll that can be opened only by “the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” (v5), “a Lamb standing, as if slain” (v6)? Opinions vary as to its content; some say the entirety of the Bible; some say it is the message of the gospel. My position is that this scroll contains all the details of the Eschaton—that is, everything that follows—recorded by the Godhead back beyond time immemorial. Only a member of that holy Godhead can reveal its contents and set in motion what it contains—and the prophet Daniel tells us why it must be the Christ.

Read Daniel 7:13-14.

Only the Son of Man—which was Jesus’ favorite way of referring to Himself—can open the scroll, because its contents declare *His* Lordship over all, *His* everlasting dominion, *His* kingdom upon the throne of David. It is, beyond everything else it describes, the narrative of the eternal, unshakable rule of Christ Jesus. And the chorus of praise from the “myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands” confirms this in vv12 and 13:

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”

THE FIRST SEAL (REVELATION 6:1-2)

After this time of worship and praise, the Lamb breaks the first seal.

Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, “Come.”

Sidebar: The KJVs, working from a different Greek manuscript, have “Come and see,” ([here and in vv3, 5, and 7](#)) which is interpreted by quite a few earlier commentators as directed toward John, the witness and narrator, as in “Come and see, John, what is about to happen.” In support of this, the text immediately following has John recording, “And I saw...” A few interpreters even say it is directed toward Jesus Himself, which seems rather bizarre.

But the better, more reliable manuscripts have just the one, thunderous command, “Come!” as seen in all our other common versions. Thus it is apparently directed toward *each of the four horses and riders*, as in, “Come forth!”

I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

The breaking of the first seal, releases the first rider, who sits upon a white horse. He is armed with a bow, which seems to suggest that it is a “symbol of distant victory,” and has been given a crown (*stephanos*)—not the crown of a sovereign, but the wreath given as a prize to a victor. His purpose and goal is to conquer.

This rider is Antichrist, the principal *earthly* character for most of the next seven years on earth. As a first example of the challenge inherent in this prophetic book for plotting out a coherent timeline, Antichrist is presented right off the bat—which makes perfect sense, since he is no doubt already at work, making plans. Yet much later (in the text), in Revelation 13, he is presented again, as if making his entrance for the first time, as the “beast coming up out of the sea.”

Read Revelation 12:17-13:1.

As we read further in the passage it is clear that “the beast out of the sea” is Antichrist, the “dragon” is Satan, and “the beast out of the earth” is the false prophet—all three comprising an unholy, obscene caricature of the holy Father, Son, and Spirit—comprising the anti-godhead. <Please refer to the handout> Because the nomenclature of prophetic text can sometimes be confusing, I have included in the handout the various ways to which the principal characters of the Tribulation are referred. On the backside of the handout is a handy harmonization of Chapter Six and Christ’s eschatological (Olivet) discourse from Matthew 24.

Anyone who has sufficient years behind them knows that most politicians will present one face when they are running for office, and another face once they have attained that office. Our current president is perhaps the ultimate example of this; he was sold as a wise, experienced statesman who would bring together into harmony all the warring factions within our nation, as well as bring harmony between the United States and other countries. I don’t care whether you are a democrat or republican: it is an empirical fact that that does not at all describe the behavior or mindset of the one now sitting in the oval office.

This illustrates the career of the Antichrist during the Tribulation. Generally speaking, for the first half of the Tribulation the Antichrist is coming onto the world stage. He is clever. He is winsome. He is a strong leader who has all the answers to the world's problems. People are drawn to him like flies to honey— or should we say like a dog to its vomit. He will eventually be recognized as the savior of the world. This describes him during the roughly first half of the Tribulation. He is working, he is plotting, he is setting in place those who will assist him in his plan, but his true purpose remains secret, shielded from the rest of the world.

F. A. Tatford: The brilliant career of this imperial rider on the white horse has been interpreted by the historicists as applying to the golden age of prosperity and good government that elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus. It is far more probable, however, that the reference is to the rise and career of a mighty imperial ruler after the rapture of the Church, who brings under his sway a vast territory in an endeavour to maintain peace, order, and prosperity.

This is just the beginning of the public career of the individual we call Antichrist. We will be encountering him at most every turn as we journey through these tumultuous seven years. As we do we will see this human puppet of Satan become more ambitious, more authoritative, more arrogant, more reprehensible, more beast-like—that is, more like his father, the Dragon.

THE TRIBULATION

Organizing the Seals, Trumpets and Bowls

Seals

- 1 Antichrist
- 2 war
- 3 famine
- 4 death
- 5 martyrs under the altar
- 6 terrible "natural" phenomenon
- 7 Trumpets

Parentetical
Visions

- remnant of Israel protected
- tribulation saints

Trumpets

- 1 1/3 vegetation burned up
- 2 1/3 sea creatures and ships destroyed
- 3 1/3 fresh water made bitter; kills many
- 4 1/3 of light from sun, moon, and stars lost
- 5 First Woe
- 6 Second Woe
- angel with the little book
- two witnesses
- 7 Third Woe: Bowls of Wrath

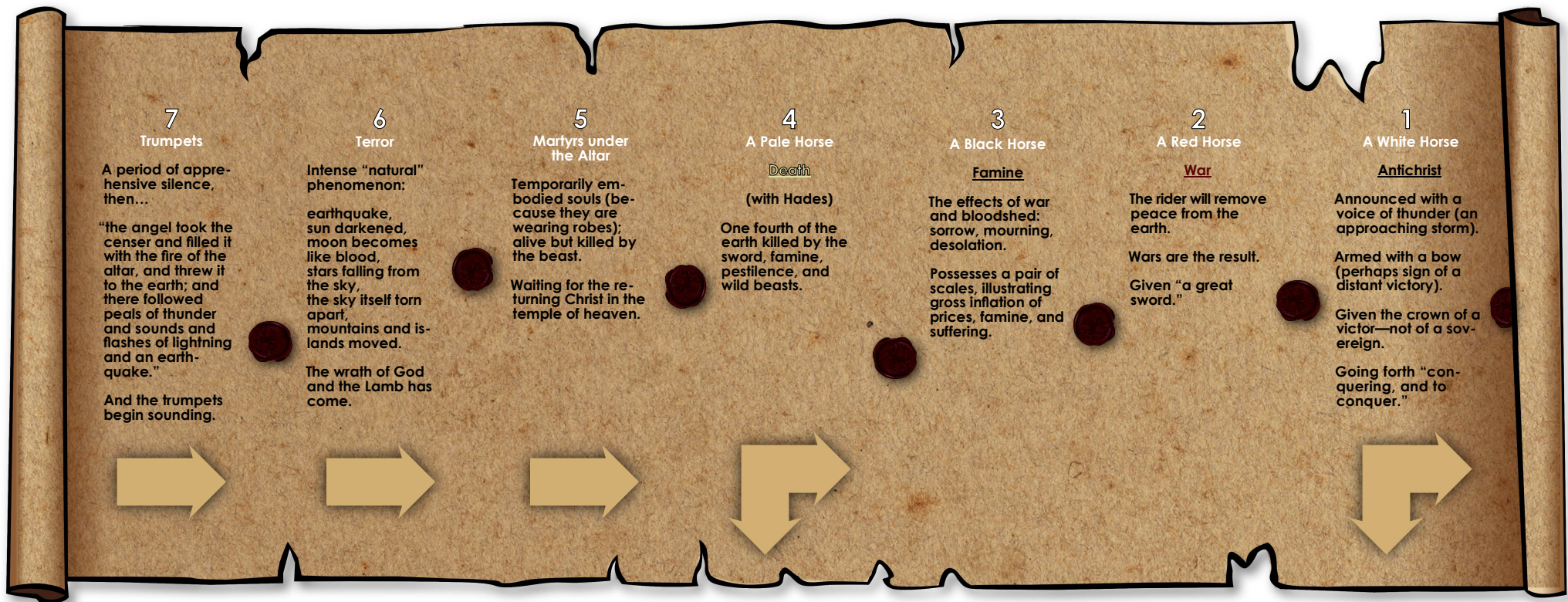
Bowls of Wrath

- 1 malignant sores
- 2 salt water to blood
- 3 fresh water to blood
- 4 sun's heat scorches beast-worshippers
- 5 intensified misery toward Antichrist's throne
- 6 Euphrates dried up
- gathering for Armageddon
- 7 cataclysmic "natural" events



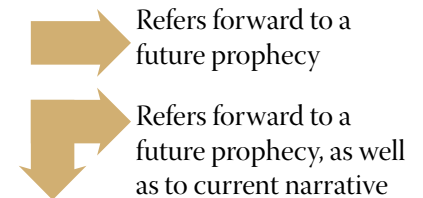
THE TRIBULATION

The Scroll and its Seals



Footnotes

1 Revelation 6:1-2 Daniel 9:26 2 Thessalonians 2:6-10	2 Revelation 6:3-4 Matthew 24:6	3 Revelation 6:5-6	4 Revelation 6:7-8 Daniel 12:1	5 Revelation 6:9-11 Revelation 7:9-17 Revelation 12:17 Revelation 20:4	6 Revelation 6:12-17 Matthew 24:7-8 Joel 2:2-30 Isaiah 34:4	7 Revelation 8:1-6 See: Seven Trumpets
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THE TRIBULATION

Principal Character Synonyms

The Great Red Dragon

also: Satan, the devil, “the serpent of old,” “the anointed cherub who covers” (Ezekiel 28:14), Beelzebul (Matthew 12:24), Belial (2 Corinthians 6:15), “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31), “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4), “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2)

The Beast from the Sea

also: Antichrist; the beast; “the little horn” (Daniel 7:8), “man of lawlessness,” “son of destruction [perdition],” “that lawless one” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-8); devil incarnate; false messiah

The Beast from the Earth

also: “the false prophet”

Jesus, the Christ

also: “the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah,” “the Root of David,” “a Lamb standing,” “the Lamb that was slain,” “a son, a male *child*” (Revelation 12:5), “one like a son of man” (Revelation 14:14), “Lord of lords and King of kings” (Revelation 17:14), “Faithful and True” (Revelation 19:11), “the Word of God,” “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:16), “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Revelation 22:13), “the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star” (Revelation 22:16)



THE TRIBULATION

Harmonizing Revelation 6 with Matthew 24 (Christ's Olivet Discourse)

“There is a remarkable similarity between the progress of chapter six as a whole and the description given by our Lord of the end of the age in Matthew 24:4-31. In both passages the order is

1. war: (Matthew 24:6-7; Revelation 6:3-4),
2. famine: (Matthew 24:7; Revelation 6:5-6),
3. death: (Matthew 24:7-9; Revelation 6:7-8),
4. martyrdom: (Matthew 24:9-10, 16-22; Revelation 6:9-11),
5. the sun darkened, the moon darkened, and the stars falling: (Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:12-14),
6. a time of divine judgment: (Matthew 24:32-25:26; Revelation 6:15-17).

The general features of Matthew 24 are obviously quite parallel to the events of the book of Revelation beginning in chapter six.”

John F Walvoord

from the series: *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

