

Lesson 49: The Trumpet Judgments

Previously...

Jesus showed the apostle John a vision of heaven. There, John saw Yahweh seated on His throne. Before Him was the completed church, represented by the 24 elders, and all of creation, represented by the four living creatures. They were worshipping God.



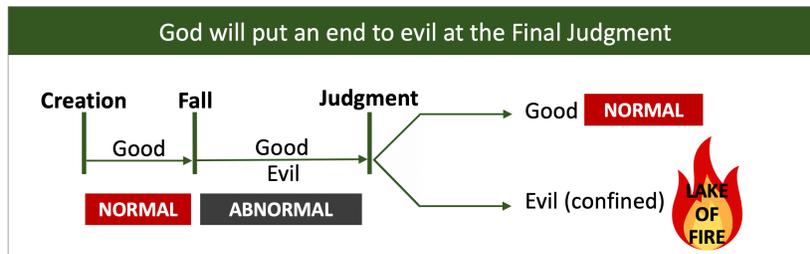
Then John saw God the Father handing over the inheritance scroll of the Kingdom of God to the only one qualified to rule—King Jesus, the Lamb who was slain. Jesus begins to break open the seven seals on the scroll to claim His inheritance.



As Jesus breaks open each seal, He releases a judgment on the whole earth. John sees clearly that what is happening on earth is being controlled from heaven.



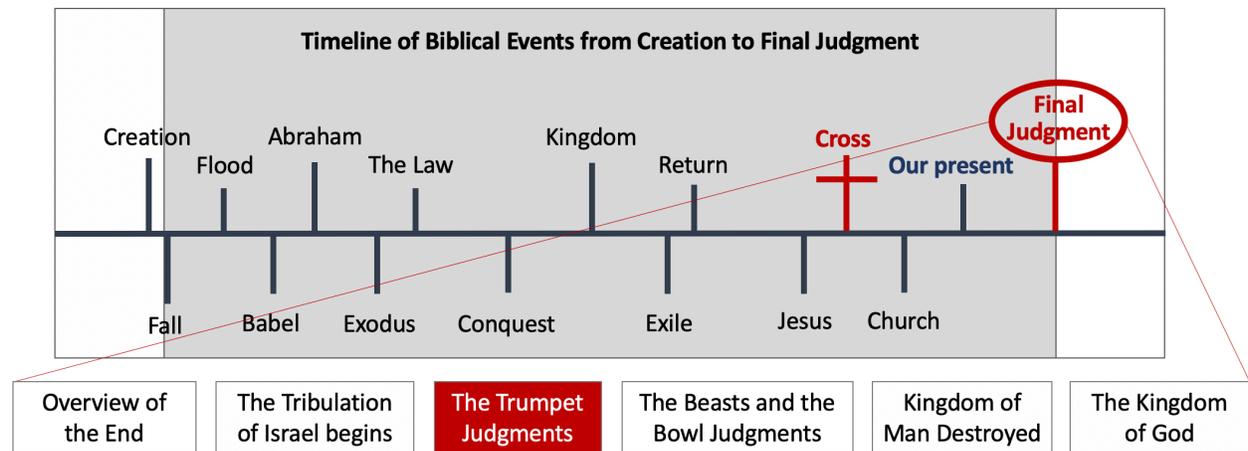
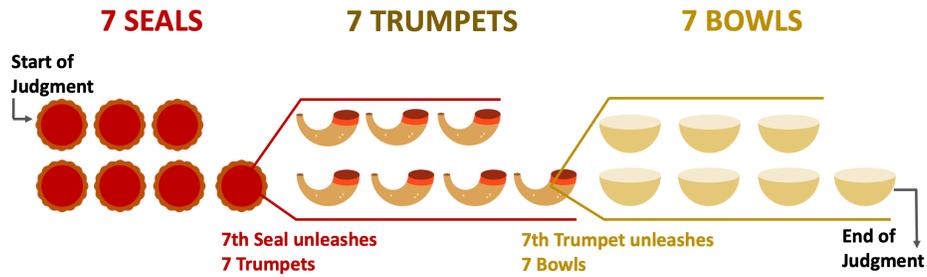
Yahweh wants John to know that He is completely in charge of history. He is judging Israel and the world to finally end the mix of good and evil.



The first six seal judgments devastate the earth. One quarter of the world’s population dies. There is widespread famine, hyperinflation and geophysical disasters. Not only that, there are disasters happening in space as well. The entire universe is being judged!



When Jesus breaks open the seventh seal, it releases all the other judgments described in Revelation!



b. The 7th Seal and First 6 Trumpet Judgments



The breaking of the seventh seal starts the seven trumpet judgments. They are very severe and supernatural. God Himself destroys the environment and climate to make it clear there is nothing “natural” about these disasters. The God of the universe is the One sending the judgments.



Revelation 8:6–12

⁶ Then the seven angels with the seven trumpets prepared to blow their mighty blasts.

⁷ The first angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire mixed with blood were thrown down on the earth. One-third of the earth was set on fire, one-third of the trees were burned, and all the green grass was burned.



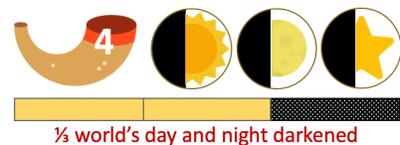
⁸ Then the second angel blew his trumpet, and a great mountain of fire was thrown into the sea. One-third of the water in the sea became blood, ⁹ one-third of all things living in the sea died, and one-third of all the ships on the sea were destroyed.



¹⁰ Then the third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from the sky, burning like a torch. It fell on one-third of the rivers and on the springs of water. ¹¹ The name of the star was Bitterness. It made one-third of the water bitter, and many people died from drinking the bitter water.



¹² Then the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and one-third of the sun was struck, and one-third of the moon, and one-third of the stars, and they became dark. And one-third of the day was dark, and also one-third of the night.



Based on our personal experience with the forces of nature, we might feel that these first four judgments sound too incredible to be true! However, this is not the first time God judges rebellious mankind in this way.

During the Exodus, God sent many supernatural judgments as well. One example is the ninth plague, darkness.

Exodus 10:22–23

²² So Moses lifted his hand to the sky, and a deep darkness covered the entire land of Egypt for three days. ²³ During all that time the people could not see each other, and no one moved. But there was light as usual where the people of Israel lived.

Note: Verses in blue indicate the study moving ahead verse by verse through Revelation.

God showed that He has the ability to be very selective in His judgment. In punishing evil mankind, He also saves those who believe in Him. This is what supernaturally happened in the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn.

Exodus 12:29–30

²⁹ And that night at midnight, the LORD struck down all the firstborn sons in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sat on his throne, to the firstborn son of the prisoner in the dungeon. Even the firstborn of their livestock were killed. ³⁰ Pharaoh and all his officials and all the people of Egypt woke up during the night, and loud wailing was heard throughout the land of Egypt. There was not a single house where someone had not died.

This plague was not some disease that spread uncontrollably through the land. Who would know which was the firstborn in every household and even among the livestock? Only God. There was no doubt in the minds of the people that this was a supernatural judgment.

Likewise, in the first four trumpets, God insists that “one-third” of the environment is destroyed. Why “one-third”? To show that it’s not a random “natural” occurrence but God is sovereignly in charge. Only He can destroy exactly one-third of the earth.

Just as the plague judgments in Egypt really happened as the Bible said it did, so we should not be amazed that what we’re studying will also literally happen in the coming future.

	1. Water turned to blood		6. Boils
	2. Frogs		7. Hail
	3. Lice (gnats)		8. Locusts
	4. Flies		9. Darkness
	5. Death of livestock		10. Death of the firstborn

John then goes on to describe what he sees after this. The next three trumpets are so much worse than the first four that it starts with an eagle calling out a warning.

Revelation 8:13 (NIV)

As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: “Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!”

These final three trumpet judgments are called “woes” or “terrors”.



The Fifth Trumpet: The First Woe

Revelation 9:1–11

¹ Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen to earth from the sky, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. ² When he opened it, smoke poured out as though from a huge furnace, and the sunlight and air turned dark from the smoke.

³ Then locusts came from the smoke and descended on the earth, and they were given power to sting like scorpions.

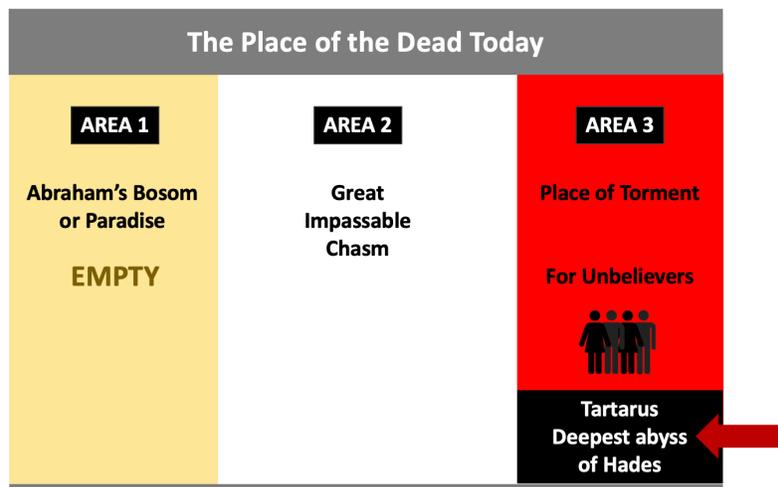
⁴ They were told not to harm the grass or plants or trees, but only the people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵ They were told not to kill them but to torture them for five months with pain like the pain of a scorpion sting. ⁶ In those days people will seek death but will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them!



⁷ The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. They had what looked like gold crowns on their heads, and their faces looked like human faces. ⁸ They had hair like women’s hair and teeth like the teeth of a lion. ⁹ They wore armor made of iron, and their wings roared like an army of chariots rushing into battle. ¹⁰ They had tails that stung like scorpions, and for five months they had the power to torment people. ¹¹ Their king is the angel from the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon—the Destroyer.

When the fifth trumpet is blown:

- i. An angel is given the key to the “abyss”, the bottomless pit (angels are sometimes called stars, for example in Job 38:7). This “abyss” is not the lake of fire. It appears to be a special holding area that God uses to trap evil demons and spirits until the end time.



We see a mention of this abyss when Jesus freed a demon-possessed man from a group of demons named Legion.

Luke 8:30–31 (NIV)

³⁰ Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

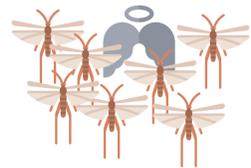
“Legion,” he replied, because many demons had gone into him. ³¹ And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

Later on, we will also learn that:

- the Antichrist comes out of the abyss (Revelation 11:7, 17:8) and
- Satan will be held in the abyss for 1,000 years before he is released again (Revelation 20:1–3).

So the abyss is not a permanent prison.

ii. When the angel opens the door, demonic, locust-like creatures fly out! We believe these creatures are not from the natural animal kingdom. Here is why:



- They have a demon king named Abaddon (Hebrew) or Apollyon (Greek). He is not Satan but a ruler over other demons.
- John’s description of them is totally out of this world and nothing like the locusts or any other creature we know from the animal kingdom. Their home is the abyss where evil spirits are kept. The abyss is not meant for humans or animals.
- These locusts are not a mindless vegetation-eating swarm. In fact they only attack certain people!

Who they attack		How they attack		How long they attack
<p>NO</p> <p>144,000 with the seal of God</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>No seal of God</p>	<p>CAN'T KILL</p>	<p>CAN TORTURE</p>	

God is the One who gives permission for the demonic locusts to attack (Revelation 9:1). His instructions are extremely specific. God protects the specially sealed believers, but this judgment affects all others.

iii. In this supernatural judgment from God, people will try to kill themselves, but they will not be able to! Bullets, knives, poison, drowning, jumping off heights... nothing will work! God will somehow prevent them from even committing suicide! There is no way they can even escape the judgment!



The Sixth Trumpet: The Second Woe

Revelation 9:12–19

¹² The first terror is past, but look, two more terrors are coming!

¹³ Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice speaking from the four horns of the gold altar that stands in the presence of God. ¹⁴ And the voice said to the sixth angel who held the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great Euphrates River.”

¹⁵ Then the four angels who had been prepared for this hour and day and month and year were turned loose to kill one-third of all the people on earth.

¹⁶ I heard the size of their army, which was 200 million mounted troops.

¹⁷ And in my vision, I saw the horses and the riders sitting on them. The riders wore armor that was fiery red and dark blue and yellow. The horses had heads like lions, and fire and smoke and burning sulfur billowed from their mouths.



¹⁸ One-third of all the people on earth were killed by these three plagues—by the fire and smoke and burning sulfur that came from the mouths of the horses. ¹⁹ Their power was in their mouths and in their tails. For their tails had heads like snakes, with the power to injure people.

Yahweh had prepared four angels, tied up at the Euphrates River, ready for this moment in history. Throughout the Bible, we don't see any good angels being tied up by God. So we believe these are evil or fallen angels. Once more, we see that to fulfil His purposes, God uses and directs both obedient and disobedient spirit beings and people!



The fallen angels are tied up at the Euphrates River. This is important for us to know because this is where the capital of the Kingdom of Man is—the city of Babylon.

Babylon, or Babel, as it was known in Genesis 11, was the centre of the Kingdom of Man. God told mankind to fill the earth. But man decided to rebel against God. They gathered at Babel and built a tower to honour themselves instead.

Since that time, Babylon has represented the evil and rebellious Kingdom of Man, always fighting against Jerusalem, the capital of the Kingdom of God. Later on, we will see how God deals with evil Babylon once and for all.

The sixth trumpet not only releases the four evil angels but also the army of 200 million that follows these angels! Some people believe that this is a modern human army with airplanes, helicopters, tanks, missiles and more. However, it’s possible that this sixth trumpet is yet another demonic attack, just like the fifth trumpet. Here are some similarities.



	Fifth Trumpet	Sixth Trumpet
Leader	Demon of the abyss, Abaddon	Four demons
Army	Demonic locusts	200 million demonic horses and riders
Description	Description of locusts appear to be supernatural	Description of the horses and riders is unusual. There are more details about the horses than about the riders. If the riders are a human army, we would expect more details about them, where they are from and which leader is leading them. But the details are on the power of the horses.

Are there examples of spirit armies in the Bible? Yes. For example, God saved Elisha from the king of Aram by sending an angelic army to defend him.

2 Kings 6:14–17

¹⁴ So one night the king of Aram sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city.

¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. “Oh, sir, what will we do now?” the young man cried to Elisha.

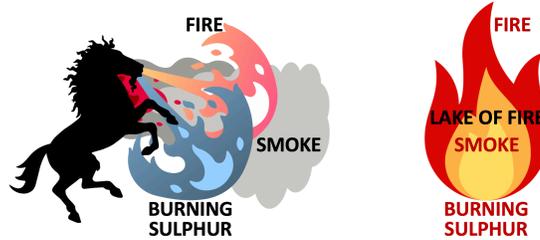
¹⁶ “Don’t be afraid!” Elisha told him. “For there are more on our side than on theirs!”

17 Then Elisha prayed, “O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!” The LORD opened the young man’s eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire.



Elisha helped his servant see that they were surrounded by a supernatural angelic army of horses and chariots. (Also see 2 Kings 2:11.) If there are good angelic armies, there could also be supernatural demonic armies.

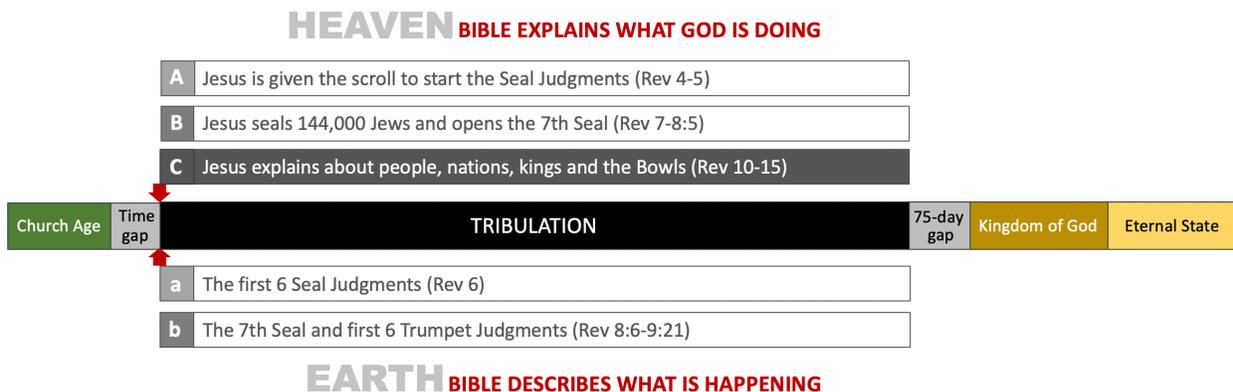
Finally, the horses kill with fire, smoke and burning sulphur (or brimstone). These things are used to describe the lake of fire four times in Revelation (14:10–11, 19:20, 20:10, 21:8).



Therefore, it’s possible that this army of 200 million is a supernatural demonic army sent to kill one-third of the earth’s population. This is yet another devastating global judgment. But there is more to come.

However, before Jesus shows John what happens on earth when the seventh trumpet is blown, He carefully explains what is happening in heaven and in the spiritual world while the first set of judgments were going on.

C. Jesus explains about people, nations, kings and the Bowls



The Mighty Angel

Revelation 10:1–4

¹ Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. ² He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, ³ and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke.

⁴ And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down.”



John sees a mighty angel come down and stand over both the land and sea. In the midst of all the destruction on earth, God is making it clear that He is still sovereign over everything.

Seven Thunders

And then John hears the voices of seven thunders. But this time, he is told to seal it up and not to write it down.

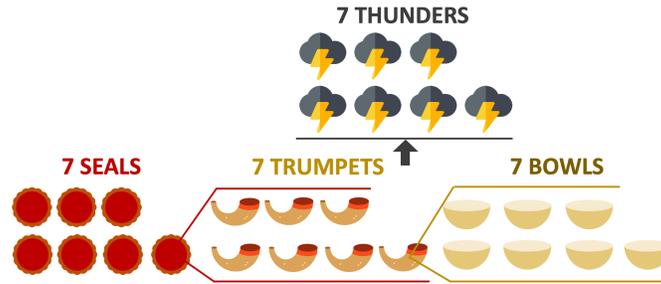
All throughout the book of Revelation, John is told to write what he sees. For example:



Revelation 1:11	Write in a book everything you see,
Revelation 1:19	Write down what you have seen—
Revelation 2:8, 12, 18, 3:7, 14	Write this letter to the angel of the church in [location]
Revelation 14:13	Write this down:
Revelation 19:9	Write this:
Revelation 21:5	Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.

So this instruction to “seal it up” is very unusual.

What are the seven thunders? We don't know. The Bible doesn't say.



But this helps us understand that for whatever reason, God has chosen not to reveal everything.

This reminds us of Moses' words:

Deuteronomy 29:29

"The LORD our God has secrets known to no one. We are not accountable for them, but we and our children are accountable forever for all that he has revealed to us, so that we may obey all the terms of these instructions.

So we must not insist that we know everything there is to know about the Tribulation. God will still surprise us with the details.

No More Delay

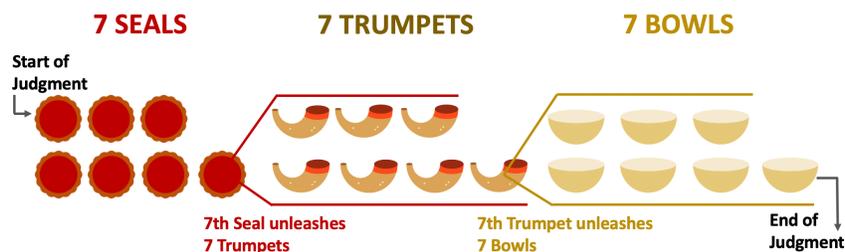
Then John hears the mighty angel say more.

Revelation 10:5-7

⁵ Then the angel I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand toward heaven. ⁶ He swore an oath in the name of the one who lives forever and ever, who created the heavens and everything in them, the earth and everything in it, and the sea and everything in it. He said, "There will be no more delay. ⁷ When the seventh angel blows his trumpet, God's mysterious plan will be fulfilled. It will happen just as he announced it to his servants the prophets."

The mighty angel says there will be no more delay. When the seventh trumpet is blown, God will complete His ("mysterious") plan!

This final trumpet releases the seven bowl judgments and the rest of the Tribulation events! It will complete God's judgment!



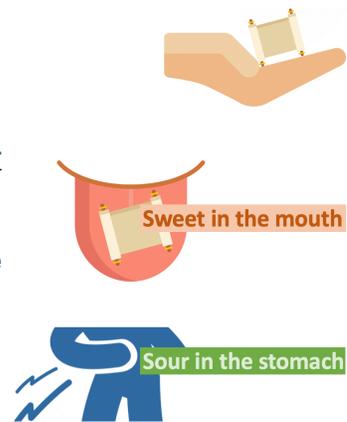
The Little Scroll

Revelation 10:8–11

⁸ Then the voice from heaven spoke to me again: “Go and take the open scroll from the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.” ⁹ So I went to the angel and told him to give me the small scroll. “Yes, take it and eat it,” he said. “It will be sweet as honey in your mouth, but it will turn sour in your stomach!”

¹⁰ So I took the small scroll from the hand of the angel, and I ate it! It was sweet in my mouth, but when I swallowed it, it turned sour in my stomach.

¹¹ Then I was told, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings.”



John is told to eat the scroll!

However, this isn't the first time a prophet is asked to do this. In the Old Testament, during the time of the Babylonian exile, God gave the prophet Ezekiel a vision of heaven. In it, he saw a scroll of God's words and was told to eat it.

Ezekiel 3:1–4, 10–11

¹ The voice said to me, “Son of man, eat what I am giving you—eat this scroll! Then go and give its message to the people of Israel.”

² So I opened my mouth, and he fed me the scroll. ³ “Fill your stomach with this,” he said. And when I ate it, it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.



⁴ Then he said, “Son of man, go to the people of Israel and give them my messages.

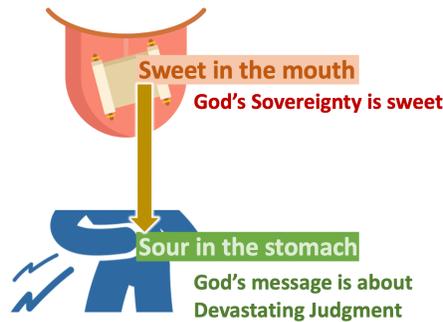
¹⁰ Then he added, “Son of man, let all my words sink deep into your own heart first. Listen to them carefully for yourself. ¹¹ Then go to your people in exile and say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says!’ Do this whether they listen to you or not.”

What's going on here? God told Ezekiel to:

- i. **Eat the scroll.** The scroll is God's Word. The scroll will be sweet in his mouth because it reflects God's sovereignty. God's sovereignty is sweet and good.
- ii. Let God's Word sink into his heart so he himself would **listen to it first.**
- iii. **Tell the people what God said.** Give God's message that he had eaten and digested to the Israelites living in exile.

Likewise, God is doing something similar with John.

i. John is told to **eat the scroll**. It will also be sweet in his mouth.



ii. However it will turn **sour in the stomach** (or “bitter” in other English translations). Why? What is in the scroll that would turn sour in the stomach? It is devastating information about peoples, nations, languages and kings.



God is going to give John two types of information.

- **“Rewind and Show”**: God shows John what is happening in the spiritual world as the seal judgments are released on earth.
- **Looking Ahead**: God also shows John what will come after the seal judgements.

This means the scroll contains the rest of the content of the book of Revelation.



Why does God tell John these things? So that John will pass on the information to all believers.

And what specifically does God reveal?

“Rewind and Show” – God explains the background behind what John had already been shown.



Looking Ahead – God tells John what is to come.



1. The Temple

John is shown a temple and told to measure its dimensions.

Revelation 11:1–2

¹ Then I was given a measuring stick, and I was told, “Go and measure the Temple of God and the altar, and count the number of worshipers. ² But do not measure the outer courtyard, for it has been turned over to the nations. They will trample the holy city for 42 months.



What is the temple? Why is John asked to measure it? And why is he asked not to measure the outer courtyard?

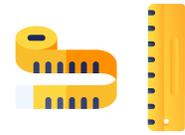
a. What is the temple?

Earlier on, we saw that John was not the only one who had been asked to eat a scroll. Ezekiel also did that.

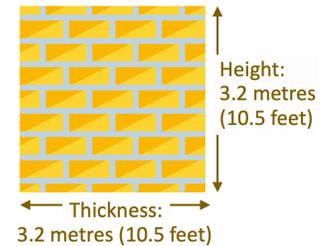
And now, John is also not the only one asked to measure a temple. Previously, Ezekiel was told to record the dimensions as the temple was measured for him.

Ezekiel 40:2–5

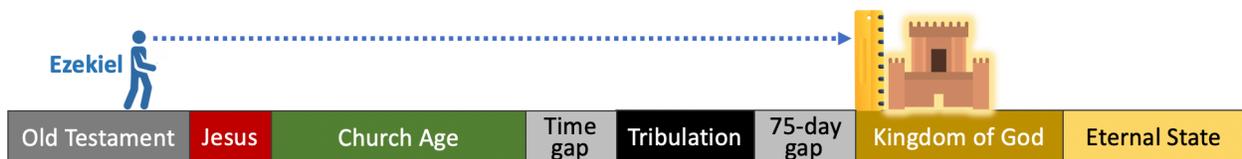
² In a vision from God he took me to the land of Israel and set me down on a very high mountain. From there I could see toward the south what appeared to be a city. ³ As he brought me nearer, I saw a man whose face shone like bronze standing beside a gateway entrance. He was holding in his hand a linen measuring cord and a measuring rod.



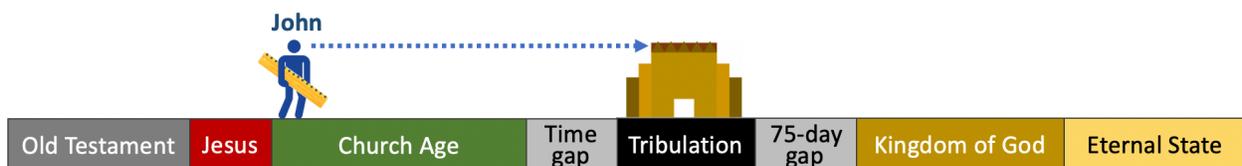
⁴ He said to me, “Son of man, watch and listen. Pay close attention to everything I show you. You have been brought here so I can show you many things. Then you will return to the people of Israel and tell them everything you have seen.” ⁵ I could see a wall completely surrounding the Temple area. The man took a measuring rod that was 10½ feet long and measured the wall, and the wall was 10½ feet thick and 10½ feet high.



In Ezekiel 40–43, Ezekiel recorded the floor plans and the dimensions of the temple that God had shown him. That temple is in the future Kingdom of God.



The temple that John was shown is also future to him. But he did not see the same temple that Ezekiel did. It is also not Herod’s temple, which had been destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. Instead, John appears to be looking at the temple that will exist during the Tribulation.

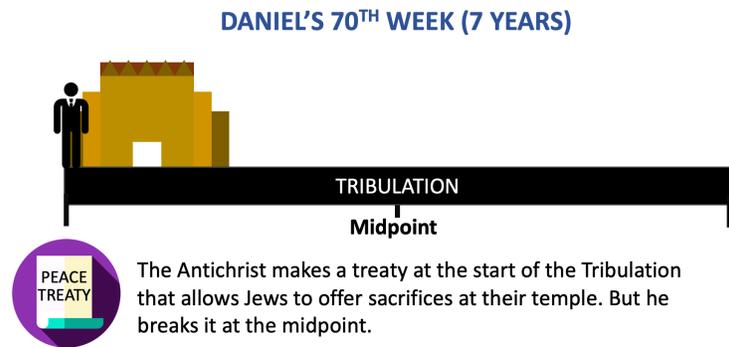


We know that there has to be a Jewish temple during the time of the Tribulation because Daniel, Jesus and Paul all mentioned one.

This is what Daniel wrote:

Daniel 9:27

The ruler will make a treaty with the people for a period of one set of seven, but after half this time, he will put an end to the sacrifices and offerings. And as a climax to all his terrible deeds, he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration, until the fate decreed for this defiler is finally poured out on him.”



Later, Jesus confirmed what Daniel prophesied about.

Matthew 24:15

“The day is coming when you will see what Daniel the prophet spoke about—the sacrilegious object that causes desecration standing in the Holy Place.” (Reader, pay attention!)

The apostle Paul also mentioned this Tribulation temple. Speaking about the Antichrist, he said:

2 Thessalonians 2:4

He will exalt himself and defy everything that people call god and every object of worship. He will even sit in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God.

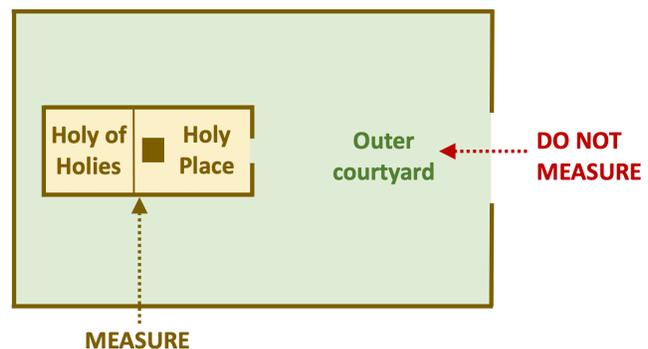
Since the destruction of Herod’s temple till our present day, there has been no temple in Jerusalem. However, for the events of Revelation to take place, a new temple must be built. We believe John is asked to measure this Tribulation temple.

b. But why measure it? And why is he asked not to measure the outer courtyard?

Typically, people take measurements of the land, building and space that they own. It is possible that because this temple belongs to God, He wants the measurements taken to show that He owns it.

However, God told John to only measure the temple, altar and to count the worshippers, but not measure the outer courtyard.

Why? Because God says He will allow unbelievers (the nations) to trample on Jerusalem for 42 months or 3½ years. Some Bible translations say 1,260 days (which is also 42 months when counting with the Jewish temple 30-day month).



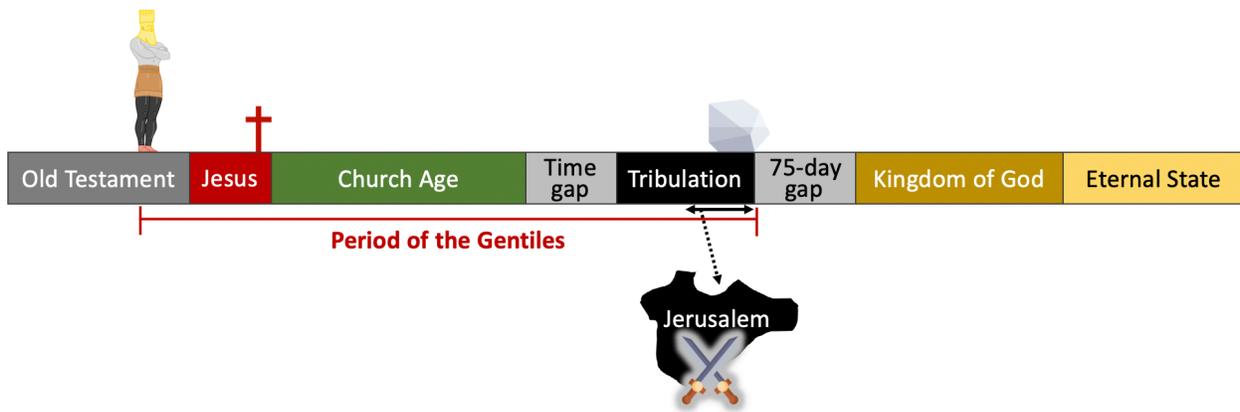
This will occur during the second half of the seven-year Tribulation, after the Antichrist breaks his treaty with the Jews. In fact, Jesus had warned His disciples about this.

Luke 21:20–24

²⁰ “And when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then you will know that the time of its destruction has arrived. ²¹ Then those in Judea must flee to the hills. Those in Jerusalem must get out, and those out in the country should not return to the city.

²² For those will be days of God’s vengeance, and the prophetic words of the Scriptures will be fulfilled. ²³ How terrible it will be for pregnant women and for nursing mothers in those days. For there will be disaster in the land and great anger against this people.

²⁴ They will be killed by the sword or sent away as captives to all the nations of the world. And Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles until the period of the Gentiles comes to an end.



This means that in the first 3½ years of the Tribulation, Israel will be allowed to sacrifice in the temple because of the peace treaty. But in the second 3½ years, the Antichrist will break the treaty and Israel and Jerusalem will be severely attacked or trampled on.



2. The Two Witnesses

During the second half of the Tribulation when Jerusalem is trampled on, God will also send two witnesses for a special ministry.

Revelation 11:3–14

³ And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will be clothed in burlap and will prophesy during those 1,260 days.”

⁴ These two prophets are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of all the earth. ⁵ If anyone tries to harm them, fire flashes from their mouths and consumes their enemies. This is how anyone who tries to harm them must die. ⁶ They have power to shut the sky so that no rain will fall for as long as they prophesy. And they have the power to turn the rivers and oceans into blood, and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they wish.



⁷ When they complete their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the bottomless pit will declare war against them, and he will conquer them and kill them. ⁸ And their bodies will lie in the main street of Jerusalem, the city that is figuratively called “Sodom” and “Egypt,” the city where their Lord was crucified.



⁹ And for three and a half days, all peoples, tribes, languages, and nations will stare at their bodies. No one will be allowed to bury them. ¹⁰ All the people who belong to this world will gloat over them and give presents to each other to celebrate the death of the two prophets who had tormented them.



¹¹ But after three and a half days, God breathed life into them, and they stood up! Terror struck all who were staring at them.

¹² Then a loud voice from heaven called to the two prophets, “Come up here!” And they rose to heaven in a cloud as their enemies watched.



¹³ At the same time there was a terrible earthquake that destroyed a tenth of the city. Seven thousand people died in that earthquake, and everyone else was terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

¹⁴ The second terror is past, but look, the third terror is coming quickly.

The description of what these two prophets can do is astounding. They are able to send fire from their mouths and control weather!

Have we seen such acts before? Yes, in the Old Testament.

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah prayed and God sent fire to burn up the sacrifice. So Elijah could “send fire from his mouth”! And when Elijah prayed for rain, God sent it too.



In other words, Yahweh will enable these two end-time witnesses to do many signs and wonders on His behalf. (They are not only like Elijah but also like Moses in that they are able to strike the earth with plagues and turn rivers into blood!)

Why are the two prophets called two olive trees and two lampstands? This image actually comes from the Old Testament.



During the Partial Return of Judah when the temple was being rebuilt, Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest were leading the work.

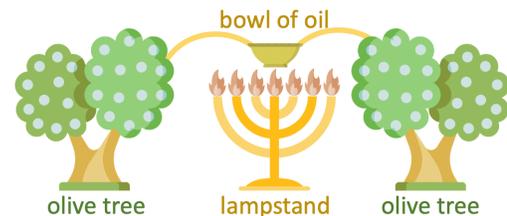


At that time, God gave the prophet Zechariah a vision of a golden lampstand and olive trees.

Zechariah 4:1, 2a, 3, 11–14

¹ Then the angel who had been talking with me returned and woke me, as though I had been asleep. ² “What do you see now?” he asked.

I answered, “I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl of oil on top of it... ³ And I see two olive trees, one on each side of the bowl.”



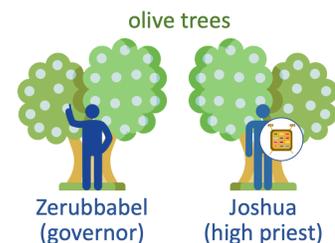
¹¹ Then I asked the angel, “What are these two olive trees on each side of the lampstand, ¹² and what are the two olive branches that pour out golden oil through two gold tubes?”

¹³ “Don’t you know?” he asked.

“No, my lord,” I replied.

¹⁴ Then he said to me, “They represent the two anointed ones who stand in the court of the LORD of all the earth.”

The Jews believe that the two olive trees represent Zerubbabel and Joshua who were there to serve Yahweh.



Now, John sees a similar vision of two trees and two lampstands before Yahweh. So likewise, we believe they represent two real people who will serve God during the second half of the Tribulation.

God will give them great power to stand against the Antichrist and the false prophet. And Yahweh will protect both of them while they work. But once they complete their job, God will allow the Antichrist, the beast that comes up out of the abyss, to murder them.

Their bodies will lie in Jerusalem, which is symbolically called Sodom and Egypt. Why the names “Sodom” and “Egypt”? Understanding the history of these two places in the Old Testament, this is what we believe:

- **Sodom:** This tells us how perverse the people in Jerusalem are as they worship the Antichrist (the beast)! (Note that at this point in the Tribulation, Jerusalem has been invaded so it’s a mixed group of people there, not just Jews.)
- **Egypt:** This tells us that there are Jews trapped in Jerusalem just as the Jews were trapped in Egypt before the Exodus.

By using Old Testament references, John can use fewer words to describe what he sees.

In fact, so perverse are the people during the Tribulation that the only time we see happiness and celebration in Revelation is when these two witnesses are killed! The rebellious people even celebrate by exchanging presents with each other!



But Yahweh doesn’t leave the two prophets dead on the ground for long. After 3½ days, He brings them to life again and they rise to heaven! The world reacts in terror at this sight.



3. The Third Woe: The Seventh Trumpet Sounds

After John learns about the two witnesses, he sees the seventh angel blowing the seventh trumpet, also known as the third woe or third terror.

Revelation 11:14–19

¹⁴ The second terror is past, but look, the third terror is coming quickly.

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices shouting in heaven: “The world has now become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.”



Messiah’s Second Coming Announced

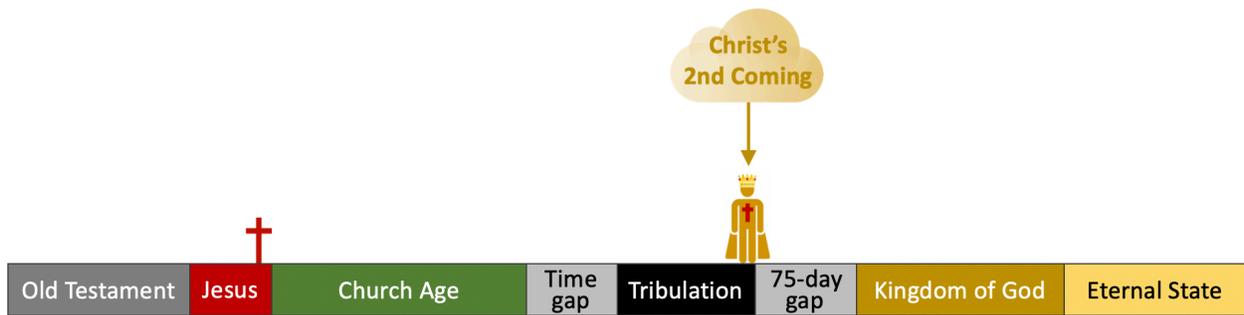
¹⁶ The twenty-four elders sitting on their thrones before God fell with their faces to the ground and worshiped him. ¹⁷ And they said, “We give thanks to you, Lord God, the Almighty, the one who is and who always was, for now you have assumed your great power and have begun to reign.”

¹⁸ The nations were filled with wrath, but now the time of your wrath has come.

It is time to judge the dead
 and reward your servants the prophets,
as well as your holy people,
 and all who fear your name,
 from the least to the greatest.
 It is time to destroy
 all who have caused destruction on the earth.”

¹⁹ Then, in heaven, the Temple of God was opened and the Ark of his covenant could be seen inside the Temple. Lightning flashed, thunder crashed and roared, and there was an earthquake and a terrible hailstorm.

This seventh trumpet is the announcement of Christ’s second coming!

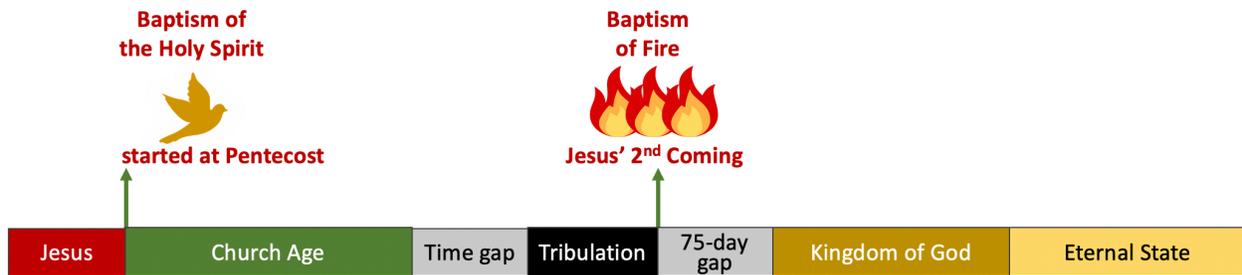


What do the 24 elders say about the time of the second coming? They say that:

- a. Jesus will **usher in the physical Kingdom of God on earth** and He will reign forever!

(At this point, we also recall what the New Testament taught about the different works of the Messiah at the first and second comings.)

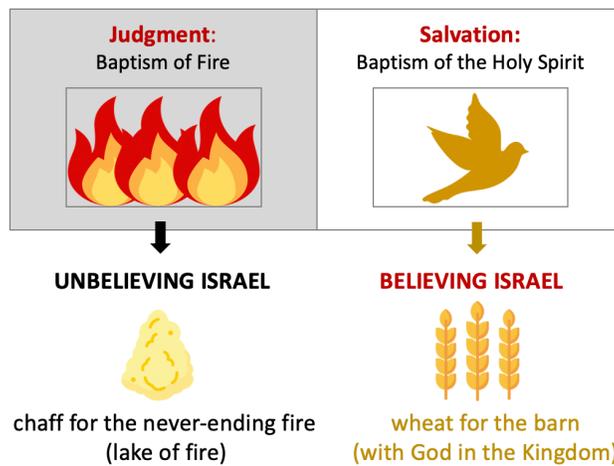
	1 st Coming	2 nd Coming
JESUS COMES TO BE:	 Suffering Messiah (brings salvation)	 Conquering Messiah (brings judgment)
JESUS' WORK OF BAPTISM:	 Baptism of the Holy Spirit (started at Pentecost for believers)	 Baptism of fire (at the 2 nd Coming for unbelievers)



b. This is also the time when Jesus will **separate the believers and unbelievers**.

Matthew 3:12

He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire.



c. At this time, Jesus will also **raise Old Testament saints and tribulation believers**. He will evaluate and reward them and also give them resurrection bodies (Daniel 12:1-3; Isaiah 26:19; Revelation 20:4).



Remember, these believers, although covered by Christ's righteousness, are not described as being His body or His bride. They are not part of the church and are only now getting their resurrection bodies.

After the 24 elders speak, John sees that there is a temple of God in heaven too! It seems probable that this heavenly temple is the template or original that the earthly versions copied!



But John is shown even more after this.



4. The Woman and the Dragon

Next, John sees a summary of the history of Israel told in a very brief and extremely symbolic way. It starts with the birth of the nation and goes till the second half of the Tribulation.

Revelation 12:1–6

¹ Then I witnessed in heaven an event of great significance. I saw a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head. ² She was pregnant, and she cried out because of her labor pains and the agony of giving birth.



³ Then I witnessed in heaven another significant event. I saw a large red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, with seven crowns on his heads. ⁴ His tail swept away one-third of the stars in the sky, and he threw them to the earth. He stood in front of the woman as she was about to give birth, ready to devour her baby as soon as it was born.



⁵ She gave birth to a son who was to rule all nations with an iron rod. And her child was snatched away from the dragon and was caught up to God and to his throne. ⁶ And the woman fled into the wilderness, where God had prepared a place to care for her for 1,260 days.



a. Who is the woman? And who is the male child?

The Bible describes this woman in a very unique way using the sun, moon and stars. Have we seen such symbols together in the Old Testament? Yes! Joseph had two dreams which he had shared with his family. This is what he said of his second dream.

Genesis 37:9–10

⁹ Soon Joseph had another dream, and again he told his brothers about it. “Listen, I have had another dream,” he said. “The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!”

¹⁰ This time he told the dream to his father as well as to his brothers, but his father scolded him. “What kind of dream is that?” he asked. “Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow to the ground before you?”

Jacob, Joseph’s father, knew how to interpret Joseph’s dream!

He said that the family members were the sun, moon and stars. And so the sun, moon and stars in Revelation 12 refer to Jacob’s family, that is, Israel. (Note also how the nation of Israel is often referred to as woman. See for example, Isaiah 54:5, 66:7; Jeremiah 3:6–10; Micah 4:10, 5:2–3.)



Jacob



Rachel



12 sons of Jacob

If this understanding is correct, did Israel (the woman) give birth to the male child who will rule with an iron rod?

Yes! He is King Jesus, a Jew from the nation of Israel. Recall Psalm 2 where Jesus is described as the Royal Son.

Psalm 2:6–9

⁶ For the LORD declares, “I have placed my chosen king on the throne in Jerusalem, on my holy mountain.”

⁷ The king proclaims the LORD’S decree:

“The LORD said to me, ‘You are my son. Today I have become your Father.

⁸ Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the whole earth as your possession.

⁹ You will break them with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots.”



So the woman represents Israel and the male child represents Jesus.



The woman is Israel



The male child is Messiah Jesus



Interestingly, the Bible summarises Jesus' first coming (His birth and ascension) in just one verse!

Revelation 12:5



Jesus' birth

⁵ She gave birth to a son who was to rule all nations with an iron rod. And her child was snatched away from the dragon and was caught up to God and to his throne.

Jesus' ascension



b. Who is the red dragon? Who are the fallen stars?

Further down in the same passage talking about the same dragon, we learn it represents Satan!

Revelation 12:9

This great dragon—the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world—was thrown down to the earth with all his angels.



The great dragon is Satan



Angels are also known as stars in the Bible and these fallen stars are angels who have chosen to take Satan's side. (We will discuss his seven heads and 10 horns in upcoming lessons.)



The fallen stars are fallen angels



John is told a very brief summary of Israel's history but from a spiritual point of view: God has always been directing the nation of Israel, but Satan has been opposing God's plan since the beginning. And this opposition has been intense! Satan declared all-out war to prevent God from accomplishing His plans of salvation for mankind!

What do we know of this?

Satan's Plan A	Satan's Plan B	Satan's Plan C
		
Destroy the Jews to prevent Messiah from coming	Destroy Messiah directly	Destroy the Jews whom Messiah came to rule

Satan's "Plan A": Destroy the Jews to prevent the Messiah from coming.

Satan knew right after the Fall that God was planning to destroy him because God told him:

Genesis 3:15a

And I will cause hostility between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring.
He will strike your head,

Since that time, Satan has been trying to destroy the Jews through various people like Pharaoh in Egypt (Exodus 1:8–22), Haman during Queen Esther's time (Esther 3), Antiochus IV Epiphanes (around 170 BC), etc. When he failed, Satan tried to kill the Messiah instead.

Satan's "Plan B": Destroy the Messiah Himself

- At Jesus' first coming, Satan tried to "devour" Jesus as soon as He was born! Satan worked through King Herod to destroy all the male babies in and around Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16).
- Satan then worked through evil men to get Jesus killed (John 13:21–27). He succeeded, only to realise the Messiah's death was part of Yahweh's plan to save mankind!

Satan's vengeful "Plan C": Destroy the people the Messiah came to rule (the Jews)

Although Satan can't touch Jesus now that He is seated at God's right hand, he has not given up. Instead, he is going after Israel again! If he can destroy God's people completely, then God will not be able to fulfil all His covenant (Abrahamic, Land, Davidic, New) promises! How can God keep His promise to a people that have been destroyed?

John is shown more regarding this invisible spiritual war.

Satan is thrown out of heaven permanently

Revelation 12:7–12

⁷ Then there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels. ⁸ And the dragon lost the battle, and he and his angels were forced out of heaven. ⁹ This great dragon—the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world—was thrown down to the earth with all his angels.



¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens,

“It has come at last—
salvation and power
and the Kingdom of our God,
and the authority of his Christ.
For the accuser of our brothers and sisters
has been thrown down to earth—
the one who accuses them
before our God day and night.

¹¹ And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb
and by their testimony.

And they did not love their lives so much
that they were afraid to die.

¹² Therefore, rejoice, O heavens!
And you who live in the heavens, rejoice!
But terror will come on the earth and the sea,
for the devil has come down to you in great anger,
knowing that he has little time.”

When Satan first rebelled against Yahweh, God cast him away from His presence but the devil and his demons still had access to heaven. (For example, see how Satan goes to heaven to accuse Job in front of God in Job 1–2.)

But now, during the Tribulation, God’s obedient angels, led by Michael, force Satan and his demons out of heaven permanently. This is a major change in history and signals to us that the end of human history is truly near!

This battle happens around the midpoint of the Tribulation. How do we know this? Because of what Satan does next.

Revelation 12:13

When the dragon realized that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.

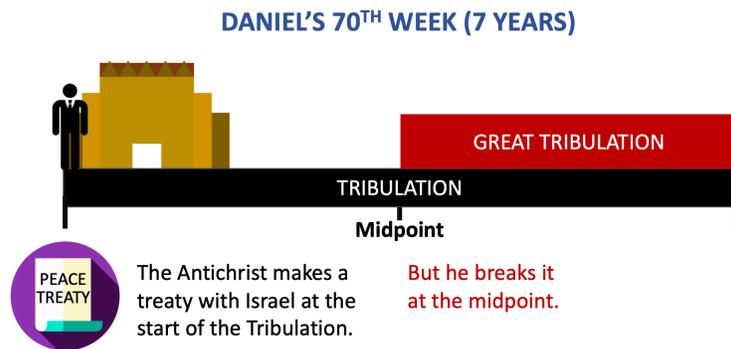


Satan is going all-out for one final attempt to destroy Israel. In fact, Jesus had warned His disciples this will be a time of suffering for Israel like no other.

Matthew 24:15–21

¹⁵ “The day is coming when you will see what Daniel the prophet spoke about—the sacrilegious object that causes desecration standing in the Holy Place.” (Reader, pay attention!) ¹⁶ “Then those in Judea must flee to the hills. ¹⁷ A person out on the deck of a roof must not go down into the house to pack. ¹⁸ A person out in the field must not return even to get a coat.

¹⁹ How terrible it will be for pregnant women and for nursing mothers in those days. ²⁰ And pray that your flight will not be in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For there will be greater anguish than at any time since the world began. And it will never be so great again.



Other Bible translations (NKJV, ESV) call this time the “Great Tribulation” (verse 21), referring to the second half of the Tribulation.

Israel is protected on eagles’ wings

But God’s plans are not thwarted. He will personally rescue the remnant of Israel.

Revelation 12:14

But she was given two wings like those of a great eagle so she could fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness. There she would be cared for and protected from the dragon for a time, times, and half a time.



Protected for 3½ years

Note: A “time” is 1 year.

“time” + “times” + “half a time” = (3½ years)
 (1 year) (2 years) (½ year)

What are these eagles' wings? They represent Yahweh. This is how God described Himself in the Old Testament.



Exodus 19:3–4

³ Then Moses climbed the mountain to appear before God. The LORD called to him from the mountain and said, “Give these instructions to the family of Jacob; announce it to the descendants of Israel: ⁴ ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.

And again:

Deuteronomy 32:9–11

⁹ “For the people of Israel belong to the LORD; Jacob is his special possession.
¹⁰ He found them in a desert land, in an empty, howling wasteland. He surrounded them and watched over them; he guarded them as he would guard his own eyes.
¹¹ Like an eagle that rouses her chicks and hovers over her young, so he spread his wings to take them up and carried them safely on his pinions.

God Himself protects His chosen people, Israel. For how long? For 1,260 days or 3½ years.

Revelation 12:6

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where God had prepared a place to care for her for 1,260 days.

This would be the duration of the second half of Israel’s Tribulation. Although Yahweh is the One judging unbelief in Israel, He will hide the Jews in a specially prepared place to prevent Satan from completely destroying them.

However, this will not prevent Satan from trying to destroy the Jewish remnant anyway.

Israel persecuted by Satan in the wilderness

Revelation 12:15–18

¹⁵ Then the dragon tried to drown the woman with a flood of water that flowed from his mouth. ¹⁶ But the earth helped her by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that gushed out from the mouth of the dragon. ¹⁷ And the dragon was angry at the woman and declared war against the rest of her children—all who keep God’s commandments and maintain their testimony for Jesus.



¹⁸ Then the dragon took his stand on the shore beside the sea.

Despite Satan’s best efforts, God will supernaturally protect the remaining Jews. However, this will drive Satan to go after other isolated groups of believing Jews.

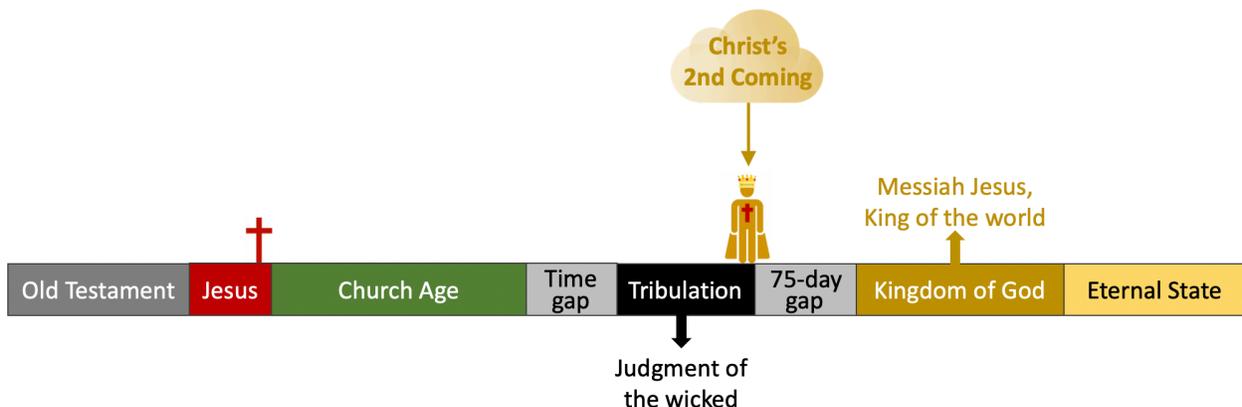
Why is Satan so intent on destroying the Jews? This is because God chose Israel to record His history and truth and to take His Word to the world. Israel is also where the Messiah and King of the universe comes from. Through Israel, God will complete His plans for creation.



So God tells us Satan will not succeed. No one, human or spirit, can disrupt God’s plans. That is one reason He gave us Revelation—so we can take comfort in this knowledge and be able to live confidently, trusting in the God who cannot fail, but who will accomplish all His plans to restore true, everlasting justice throughout all His creation. He will achieve what no human plan of social transformation has ever done or will ever do.

All through the events of Revelation, Jesus is very careful to make it clear that God is the One who is in charge. Yahweh has not been overpowered by the evil forces. The Tribulation is His plan.

Yahweh will make Jesus King of the world through judgment of the wicked during Tribulation.



During Jesus’ first coming, Satan tried to tempt Him into bowing down to him to get all the kingdoms of the world (Matthew 4:8–9). Jesus refused. Instead, we know Jesus will legitimately become King by triumphing over evil!

In the next lesson, we will continue to learn about the other pieces of information that Jesus tells John regarding what is happening with people, nations, kings and the bowl judgments.

“Rewind and Show” – God explains the background behind what John has already been shown.



Looking Ahead – God tells John what is to come.



Is the Tribulation really that bad? With the world being so evil, aren't we all already living in a time of tribulation?

Some people feel that the world today is already filled with so much evil, tragedy, disaster, pain and suffering. They can barely imagine that it will get far worse. Yet, if we believe the Bible, we have to say that today's suffering is nothing compared to what will come.

For example, just based on the seal and trumpet judgments, this is what the Bible says to expect.

Number of human deaths

If we use a world population of 7.7 billion people:

- the fourth seal will kill 1.9 billion people ($\frac{1}{4}$ of 7.7 billion) and
- the sixth trumpet will kill another 1.9 billion people ($\frac{1}{3}$ of the remaining 5.8 billion).



$\frac{1}{4}$ world's people killed



$\frac{1}{3}$ world's people killed

This means a total of **3.8 billion people**, or 50% of the world's entire population will be **killed within seven years**, not counting the deaths from the bowl judgments that are yet to come! The world has not seen such a horrific death toll.

In fact, Jesus Himself told His disciples that if God in His mercy does not limit the duration of the Tribulation, there will be no survivors left on all of planet earth.

Matthew 24:22

In fact, unless that time of calamity is shortened, not a single person will survive. But it will be shortened for the sake of God's chosen ones.

Let us not downplay the severity of the Tribulation. From the start of the opening of the seals, it will be a time like no other.

Therefore, let us take Jesus' warning seriously. Let us live godly lives and let us warn our loved ones of this coming terrible time. Perhaps they too will be saved from the judgment that God will unleash on Israel and rebellious mankind.

Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions as a group or use them for personal reflection.

1. Though the descriptions of the judgments are frightening and horrifying, the Bible makes it clear that what is happening on earth is being directed by God in heaven. How does that make you feel? What do you think of God's control over world history?
2. John is told to eat the little scroll. How have we followed his example in "eating" God's Word? In reflecting on our life with God, are we "eating" His Word regularly? What parts have been sweet to us? What parts have been bitter? And after eating, how has His Word impacted our lives?
3. It appears the two witnesses know their "fate" when they arrive on the scene in the second half of the Tribulation. They know God intends to let them die as part of their testimony for Him. In our own lives, are we prepared to make any sacrifice that God asks of us? Or are we reluctant to go all out for Him who loved us and saved us by dying for us? Is there a limit in your mind that you are afraid or reluctant to cross?



Pre-reading for next lesson: Revelation 13–18 (whole chapters)