

Message #91 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*
"Time Line"

With Randy Smith
(269) 763-2114

Preparation Ministries, Inc

PO BOX 475 OLIVET, MI 49076

preparationministries@gmail.com

(Please feel free to call, or send messages)

Web Site: <http://www.preparationministries.net>

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to present to you a time line for the order of events for the last days. There's a lot of confusion in the church today as to whether Jesus will return before or after the great tribulation, or even if there is no great tribulation. What I have to offer you is not completely descriptive of each detail of the end times prophecies, but hopefully I can point out some things which will help you get a perspective on the times and events of the last days. I won't go into depth today, but will only try to give you the order of events as they occur in succession, and we'll start with Revelation, chapter 6. Hopefully this will help you comprehend what is currently taking place and which will also soon come to pass.

Chapter six of Revelation starts out with a description of what is commonly referred to as the four horsemen of the apocalypse. These four horsemen represent an ongoing event which might be equated with the, "times of the gentiles," referred to in Luke 21:24. Whether it is or not is not my point today. I just want you to gain a perspective of the time line, the order of events, for the last days. Just realize that what these four horsemen represent is an ongoing battle between the forces of good and evil. What I specifically want you to see is the beginning of the time line of the last days, and not what the meaning of each symbol is. Besides, some of the symbolism I clearly understand, and some of it I do not understand. So, if you're looking for a complete explanation of the end time prophecies, then you probably should ask one of the television preachers who claim to know it all. Well, maybe you shouldn't. But anyway, let's go on to the next seal.

After the first four seals, which we refer to as four horsemen, we have a fifth seal which takes place. This seal describes souls which are found under the altar. This is a reference to Christians who have given themselves in sacrifice. But I'm not talking about physical martyrdom, but about spiritual martyrdom. I'm talking about dying daily, just as Paul explained that he died daily. To die daily is to put down the desires of the flesh which embodies us, and to live unselfishly for the sake of Jesus Christ and for our fellow Christians. Let me take just a minute here and explain the concept of this fifth seal, because this seal is important in establishing the order of events.

In the Old Testament, we read about the altar of burnt offerings. It was on this great altar where sacrifices were offered. This altar of sacrifice used by the Israelites under the Law of Moses had a metal grate on which the sacrificial animals were placed for burning. When the sacrifices were burned to ashes, the ashes of the animal passed through the grating and onto the ground underneath the altar. This is why the fifth seal describes souls as being under the altar, rather than souls being on the altar. If you become a living sacrifice, you are then purified, in a spiritual sense, with the fire of God. But under the Law of Moses, an animal was not burned on the altar unless it was an acceptable sacrifice before God. If you end up as ashes under the altar of God, it is because God accepts you as a clean sacrifice to him. It is then, and only then, that the fire of God purifies you by consuming your sinful flesh nature. At this point, the only thing left is the pure ashes of your soul which, symbolically speaking, fall through the grate of the altar. White robes are then given to these souls because they have been found acceptable in the eyes of God. The white robes signify the purity of righteousness which comes from the removal of the dross of sin by the purifying fire of God.

Because the fifth seal indicates death in righteousness, we can see the element of extreme persecution in this fifth seal, just as martyrdom in the physical sense results from extreme persecution. It makes no difference whether you suffer martyrdom physically or only die daily in a spiritual sense. Either way you have endured persecution. Martyrdom only occurs as a result of extreme persecution. Persecution is affliction which comes from the wickedness of the world against God's people. God does not persecute his children. God's children are persecuted by evil forces. This is what the great tribulation is as referred to in Matthew 24.

Now, you may not consider this fifth seal as referring to the great tribulation, however, when we look at the sixth seal, we see that this next seal takes place immediately after the great tribulation. No, it isn't quite expressly clear just in the reading of Revelation 6:12-13, but when we compare Revelation 6:12-13 with the verse of Matthew 24:29, we see that the great tribulation takes place just prior to the sixth seal. Here, let me show you what I mean. Let's go to Matthew 24, and read some verses there.

First, let's look at Matthew 24:21. It says, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." It is plain that this verse refers to the great tribulation, for it says in verse 21 that this Tribulation will be greater than ever was in history before Christ and greater than ever will be in the future. With this kind of

explanation, it is plain to see that there never was nor ever will be a tribulation against God's people which is greater than what is referred to right here. This is why we refer to the great tribulation that Jesus was talking about, as the great tribulation. Now, to keep the order of our time line, let's take a look at chapter 24, verse 29. This verse refers to the same event as spoken of in Revelation 6:12-13 when talking about the sixth seal. In order to get the full essence of these two scriptures, let's first read Matthew 24:29, and then we'll read Revelation 6:12-13 right afterward. By reading the two verses together it is easy to see that they both refer to the same thing. Alright, starting with Matthew 24:29, It says, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give her light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." O.K. Now we'll read Revelation 6:12-13. It says, "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; 13 And the stars of heaven fell onto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind."

Now, notice that each of these two Bible passages describes the same event. The sun and moon are darkened and the stars fall from heaven. When we see this same event described in each of these two passages of scripture, it shows us two very important things. First, Matthew 24:29 describes this event of the sun and moon darkening and the stars falling from heaven as taking place immediately after The great tribulation. This is important because it tells us the order of events. First the great tribulation, and then immediately after this great tribulation the sun and moon will be darkened and the stars will fall from heaven. This shows us very clearly that the sun and moon will not be darkened until after the great tribulation. Now, the second thing of importance from these two scripture passages is that Revelation 6:12-13 tells us that the event of the sun and moon darkening and stars falling from heaven takes place at the opening of the sixth seal. When we compare scripture passages, this shows that the sixth seal also takes place immediately after the great tribulation.

Because the sixth seal takes place immediately after the great tribulation, then we can also see the similarity of the fifth seal with the great tribulation itself. Souls under the altar described in the fifth seal of Revelation is a reference to a result of the spiritual and physical persecution of Christians in the last days. And, because we can see the comparison between Matthew 24:29 and Revelation 6:12-13, and because we can see that the fifth seal of Revelation is placed immediately prior to the darkening of the sun and moon, then we can see that the first four seals of Revelation also take place prior to the great tribulation.

Now, as long as we're at this point, let's read another verse concerning the darkening of the sun and moon. This verse is found in the book of Joel. Joel 2:31 says, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD comes." Notice that this verse said that the sun and moon will be darkened before the great and terrible day of the Lord. The day of the Lord is referred to several times in scripture, and is always referring to the great wrath of God which is poured out upon the wicked. God's wrath in the time of the great and terrible day of the Lord is not the same thing as the great tribulation, for the

wrath of God is poured out upon the wicked people of earth. Great tribulation is persecution of the righteous, not persecution from God. To think that the wrath of God is the same thing as great tribulation is where the pre-tribulation doctrine misses the mark. The great tribulation and the great and terrible day of the Lord's wrath are two separate things, for they are separated by the event of the sun and moon darkening. A simple comparison of Joel 2:31 and Matthew 24:29 tells us that one takes place before the darkening of the sun and moon, and one takes place after the darkening of the sun and moon. If the great tribulation is separated from the great and terrible day of the Lord's wrath, then they can't be the same thing.

So, in our time line of the last days, we can see that the order of events are like this. The first seal, with the rider on the white horse, the second seal, with the rider on the red horse, the third seal, with the rider on the black horse, and the fourth seal, with the rider on the pale horse. Then it is the fifth seal, which is described as souls under the altar who are given white robes. This is the end of the great tribulation period. Then, the sun and moon are darkened, which signifies the opening of the sixth seal. Because of what we have read in Joel 2:31 and Matthew 24:29, we know that this sixth seal marks the end of the great tribulation and the beginning of the great and terrible day of the Lord's wrath.

Now, let's go on to the seventh seal. It is the seventh seal which brings to pass the seven trumpet judgments. But notice, if you haven't already realized this, that the seventh seal is divided into seven trumpet judgments, and also, that the seventh trumpet is divided into the seven bowls, or vials, of wrath upon the wicked people of earth. Therefore, the seventh seal contains not only the seven trumpet judgments, but also the seven vials of wrath. However, prior to the actual opening of the seventh seal, we have some significant events. Before the seventh seal is opened there is first a sealing of two groups of people. The first group is made up of 144,000 people. This is from the twelve tribes of Israel. Revelation, chapter seven, indicates that there are 12,000 who are sealed from each tribe.

Once again, I want to remind you that the object for this time line is not to make an explanation of the individual events of the last days, but rather to make a study of the order of these events. What I really want you to see from this is that just after the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars immediately at the close of the great tribulation, there is a process of sealing these two groups of people. The first group is the twelve tribes of Israel, and the second group of people is those who have specifically come out of great tribulation. Revelation, chapter seven, tells us this. Let's read the verses for this. They are Revelation 7:9-14. It reads, "After this I saw, and, behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb. 11 And all the angels stood around the throne, and also the elders and the four beasts, and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, 12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. 13 And one of the elders answered, saying to me, Who are these who are arrayed in white robes? And where did they come from? 14 And I said to him, Sir, you know.

And he said to me, These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” It is evident that this group is considered servants of God, and therefore they are sealed with God's seal as referred to in verse three.

This is one further proof that the great tribulation takes place before the opening of the seventh seal, and also quite plain, at least to me, that Christians definitely will go through it. Revelation 7:9 refers to this group of people as such a great multitude that no man could number them. It also says that they come out of every nation, every kindred, every language, and every group of people. This, in my opinion, is referring specifically to Christians, and separates them from the first group of people which I believe are those Israelites who come to accept Jesus Christ as the true Messiah, but only in the last days during the tribulation period. Here again is my opinion. And once again I want to remind you that I am trying to stay on track and present a time line. I don't want to get into discussions of who is who or what is what at this time except to clarify the actual order of events.

Anyway, what we have is the sealing of the twelve tribes as well as the sealing of those who were already Christians during the great tribulation. After this we have the opening of the seventh seal. The seventh seal begins with what is described in Revelation 8:1 as a half hour of silence. Then seven trumpets are given to the seven angels which are standing before the throne of God.

Now, to bring the time line into perspective, we can see that each trumpet is sounded separately. And for each trumpet there is poured out upon Earth an event which symbolizes the judgment of God. This is not necessarily God's wrath upon the wicked, for that wrath is summed up in the seven vials which takes place immediately after the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet. These judgments are events which establish God's authority in the earth and also establishes the wickedness of those who reject Jesus Christ. These trumpets are each sounded in sequence, each of them causing a specific event to take place.

Now, up to this time the order of events is quite easily followed, but beginning with Revelation 11 there arises an opportunity for confusion to the order of the time line. Revelation 11 starts out describing the event concerning the two witnesses of God, and the death of the testimonies. Here again, I don't want to stray from our intent, so I won't go into an explanation of what the two witnesses are. If you have an interest on this subject you can contact us for messages #7 and #52. Or just ask for the witnesses CDs. But what the witnesses are is not individuals, but rather the two testimonies which are killed. Jesus Christ, as the word of God, is a witness to the truth of God. In the same sense, the Holy Spirit of God also gives witness to God through the power of God. These two representatives of God in the earth give the testimonies, or witnesses, of God. It is at the precise time of Revelation 11:7 that these two testimonies of God in the earth are brought to an end. The wicked people of the earth kill the witnesses of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in order to destroy the testimony of God in the earth. This total rejection of God seals the fate of the wicked.

However, the result is actually the removal of the two testimonies from earth along with the saints of God, for at this time there is a great earthquake, and then the seventh trumpet sounds. The last trumpet, as referred to by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:52, is the actual time of the second coming of Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven. This is described in Revelation 11:15-19. However, what follows next is that John, the writer of Revelation, presents a synopsis, which means a short overview, of events from the time from Christ's birth until the point referred to by the seventh trumpet. When we recognize that Revelation 12:1 through Revelation 14:13, is a short historical overview of events, then the order of events remains clear. What we see then is that we can jump over the synopsis and go from Revelation 11:19 straight to Revelation 14:14. This abridgment gives us a true perspective of the actual time line by clarifying the order of events.

What we have then is an order of events where the coming of the Lord coincides with the same time as when the wicked people of earth attempt to do away with the witness of Jesus Christ and the witness of the Holy Spirit. The wicked people of Earth seem for a moment to be victorious, and it would appear at first that Satan is the winner. But it is at this time that God calls his Word and his Power up into heaven along with the saints of God. After God calls his Word and Power out of the earth, and takes his bride up also, then the seven vials of God's wrath are poured out on the wicked.

After the vials of wrath are poured out, God's kingdom is established on Earth over those remaining humans who were not destroyed by the wrath of God. It is at this time that Satan is bound, and the 1000 year reign of Christ begins. For 1000 years we will live and reign with Christ over the people who are left on the earth. It will be a time of unequalled joy and peace. At the end of this 1000 year reign, Satan will be loosed again in order to go out to deceive the nations. This will be the final demonstration of why Satan cannot be allowed to exist along with the righteous. The ultimate end will be the final destruction of wicked influence, and at this time a new heaven and a new earth will be created.

Now, this completes the time line. I'm sure it leaves many questions, but we will always have questions as long as we seek knowledge. But what I wanted to present to you today is just the order of events for the last days, and not the actual explanation of those events. I hope it has helped in some way. If you have questions, please feel free to contact us. We'll try to explain the best we can. Thanks for being with us.