

Pulling Back the Curtain on the Great Tribulation

Message 3 of 5 in the series: "Pulling Back the Curtain"

A. About 60 years after He ascended into heaven, Jesus pulled back the curtain on himself, heaven, and the end times for his disciple John.

"This is a **revelation** from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants the events that must soon take place. He sent an angel to present this revelation to his servant John, who faithfully reported everything he saw. This is his report of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. God **blesses** the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who **listen** to its message and **obey** what it says, for the time is near." Revelation 1:1-3 (NLT)

B. Jesus pulled back the curtain on a terrifying period in the end times known as The Great Tribulation.

Tribulation = Great affliction, trial, or distress; suffering

1. The Great Tribulation will be a time of global catastrophe, war, disease, destruction, and chaos.

"Then there will be a time of **anguish greater** than any since nations first came into existence..."

Daniel 12:1b (NLT)

"For there will be **greater anguish** than at any time since the world began. And it will never be so great again. 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." Matthew 24:21-22 (NLT)

2. The Great Tribulation will be a time of great sin and rebellion against God.

"And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved." Matthew 24:10-13 (NLT)

3. The Great Tribulation will be a time of God's wrath.

"...I am here to tell you what will happen later in the **time of wrath**. What you have seen pertains to the very end of time." Daniel 8:19 (NLT) (see also *Zephaniah 1:14-15*, *Nahum 1:6-10*, & *Malachi 3:2*)

Note: God's wrath will be poured out on our wicked, unbelieving world via **three series of terrifying end-times judgments** during a seven-year period in which they become increasingly worse and more intense. "He (the Antichrist) will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him." Daniel 9:27 (NIV)

a. The Seven Seal Judgments:

1. The Antichrist comes to power like a conqueror on a white horse. (Rev. 6:1-2)
2. Great warfare breaks out on the earth like a destroyer of peace on a red horse. (Rev. 6:3-4)
3. Great famine follows like a rider on a black horse. (Rev. 6:5-6)
4. Death and the grave appear as riders on a pale green horse. ¼ of the global population dies through war, famine, plagues, and wild animals. (Rev. 6:7-8)
5. Christian martyrs under the altar of heaven cry out for justice and are told to wait until the full number of Christian martyrs are killed and can join them. (Rev. 6:9-11)
6. A global earthquake takes place moving mountains and islands, the sun turns black, the moon turns blood-red, and the sky is rolled up like a scroll. (Rev. 6:12-14)

Note: Even though people will realize that these disasters are judgments from God, many will try to run from Him and hide rather than run to Him and repent. "Then everyone—the kings of the earth, the rulers, the generals, the wealthy, the powerful, and every slave and free person—all hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. And they cried to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and **hide us from the face of the one who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb**. For the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to survive?'" Revelation 6:15-17 (NLT)

Note: 144,000 Jewish people will come to Christ, and under His protection, they will be powerful witnesses for Jesus during the Great Tribulation. "Then I heard **the number of those who were sealed: 144,000** from all the tribes of Israel... They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased

from among mankind and offered as first fruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.” Revelation 7:4,14:4b-5 (NIV)

Note: A vast number of people will come to faith in Christ during the Great Tribulation. **“After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb.** They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a great roar, ‘Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!’ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living beings. And they fell before the throne with their faces to the ground and worshiped God. They sang, ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength belong to our God forever and ever! Amen.’ ... **These are the ones who died in the great tribulation.** They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white. That is why they stand in front of God’s throne and serve him day and night in his Temple. And he who sits on the throne will give them shelter. They will never again be hungry or thirsty; they will never be scorched by the heat of the sun. For the Lamb on the throne will be their Shepherd. He will lead them to springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe every tear from their eyes.” Revelation 7:9-17 (NLT)

7. There is silence in heaven for half an hour before the seven trumpet judgments begin. (Rev. 8:1-5)

b. The Seven Trumpet Judgments:

1. Hail and fire mixed with blood burns 1/3 of the trees and all of the grass on earth. (Rev. 8:6-7)
2. A great mountain of fire is thrown into the sea killing 1/3 of all sea-life and destroying 1/3 of all ships. (Rev. 8:8-9)
3. A huge, burning meteor, “Wormwood”, falls to earth poisoning 1/3 of all fresh water. (Rev. 8:10-11)
4. Light from the sun, moon, and stars is diminished by 1/3. (Rev. 8:12-13)
5. A horde of demonic locusts with the power to sting like scorpions are released from the bottomless pit to torment those who refuse to believe in God for five months. (Rev. 9:1-12)
6. 1/3 of the earth’s population is killed by a weaponized army of 200 million troops. (Rev. 9:13-19)

Note: Even though all of these prophecies are obviously being fulfilled, some people will still refuse to repent. “The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues **still did not repent** of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.” Revelation 9:20-21 (NIV)

Note: God calls all the people of the world to repent through the ministry of two prophetic witnesses who are able to perform miracles similar to those of Moses and Elijah. (Rev. 11:1-14)

7. The seven bowl judgments begin. (Rev. 11:15-19)

c. The Seven Bowl Judgments:

1. Painful sores break out on those who have the mark of the Anti-Christ. (Rev. 16:1-2)
2. The sea turns to blood and all remaining marine life dies. (Rev. 16:3)
3. All rivers turn to blood in judgement of the shed blood of God’s prophets. (Rev. 16:4)
4. The sun scorches people with intense heat. (Rev. 16:8-9)
5. The earth is plunged into darkness. (Rev. 16:10-11)
6. Evil spirits entice rulers from around the world to gather their armies for the battle of Armageddon. (Rev. 16:12-16)
7. A devastating global earthquake levels all the cities of earth/100 lb. hailstones fall. (Rev. 16:17-21)

Note: Even when they have nothing left, some people will still refuse to repent. “...they cursed the God of heaven for their pains and sores. But they did not repent of their evil deeds and turn to God.”

Revelation 16:11 (NLT)

Note: All of God’s judgments on our sinful world are perfectly just and appropriate. “And I heard the angel who had authority over all water saying, ‘You are just, O Holy One, who is and who always was, because you have sent these judgments. Since they shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, you have given them blood to drink. It is their just reward.’ And I heard a voice from the altar, saying, ‘Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, your judgments are true and just.’” Revelation 16:5-7 (NLT)

C. Three Life Applications:

1. We don't need to fear God's wrath if we have a personal relationship with Jesus.

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be **saved from God's wrath through him!**" Romans 5:8-9 (NIV)

"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words... For God **did not appoint us to suffer wrath** but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, 5:9 (NIV)

2. We should tell as many people as we can about Jesus with our words and our lives.

"So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, '**Come back to God!**' For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. As God's partners, we beg you not to accept this marvelous gift of God's kindness and then ignore it. For God says, 'At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.' Indeed, the 'right time' is now. Today is the day of salvation." 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2 (NLT) (See also *Isaiah 49:8*)

"And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found **living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless** in his sight. And remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved." 2 Peter 3:14-15a (NLT)

3. We must be ready for Christ to come for us all the time.

"However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows. When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. People didn't realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes. Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left. So you, too, must keep watch! For you don't know what day your Lord is coming." Matthew 24:36-42 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

1. Read Daniel 12:1 & Matthew 24:9-13 & 21-22. How did Jesus describe the end times? How does this make you feel?
2. Read Daniel 8:19, Zephaniah 1:14-15, Romans 5:6-11, & Revelation 16:5-11. What do these passages teach us about God's wrath? Why do you think it's often unpopular for Christians to talk about God's wrath?
3. Read Revelation 6:15-17, 9:20-21, & 16:11. How will some people respond when obvious judgments from God are poured out on our sinful world? Why wouldn't everyone repent?
4. Read 2 Peter 3:14-15. Why hasn't God sent his judgments already?
5. How should Christians live in light of such dire predictions regarding the end of the world? (Matthew 24: 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2)
6. What can Centerpoint do to warn people about God's coming judgment and tell them about God's forgiveness and love through Jesus Christ?
7. Do you know people who don't know Jesus? How often do you pray for them to come to Christ? Are you ready to tell others about how you came to know Christ and how they can, too?