

The Tribulation Period

INTRODUCTION

- So far in our study of the tribulation period we have investigated the following aspects:
- THE TERMINOLOGY OF THE TRIBULATION
- THE BEGINNING AND LENGTH OF THE TRIBULATION
- THE PRIMARY PURPOSES OF THE TRIBULATION
- SOME KEY PERSONALITIES OF THE TRIBULATION
 - The man called Antichrist & his False Prophet
 - The 144,000
 - The Two Witnesses
- In this study we will begin investigating the events of the tribulation period.

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INTRODUCTION

- Understanding the individual events and how they relate to the whole is not always easy. We must attempt to plot the events in a manner that seems to fit with what has been revealed through the apostles and prophets
- For the sake of analysis, we will divide the Tribulation into three parts: (1) events of the first half; (2) events at the midpoint; and (3) events of the second half.
- Let us begin by looking at the first half of the Tribulation.

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EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION: THE FIRST HALF

The Nation Of Israel

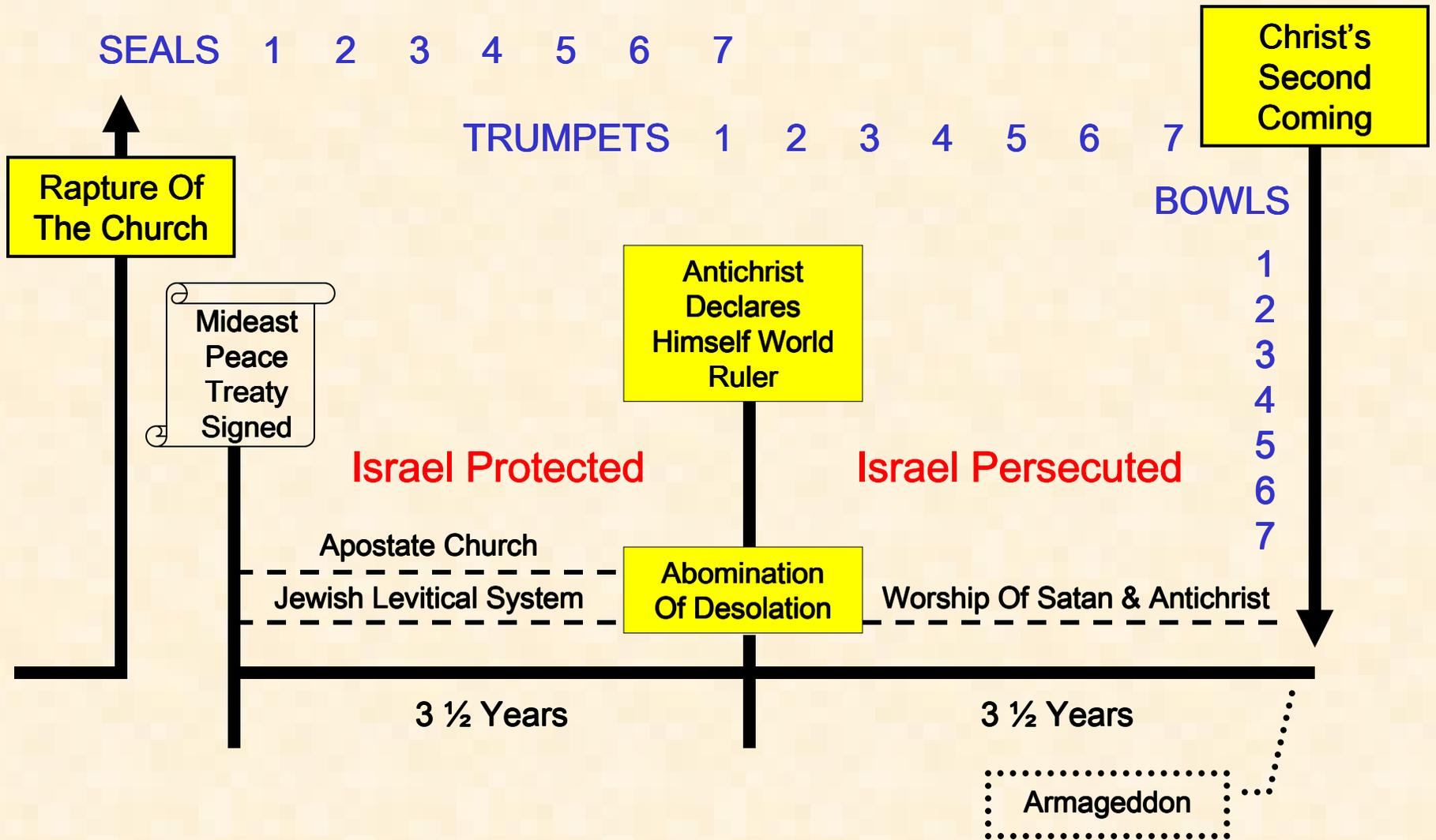
- When the Tribulation begins, Israel is back in their ancient land. The prophets saw that in the end times the nation would be restored to their land by the Lord Himself (Deut. 30:4-5; Ezek. 20:40-44; 36:22-36; 37:1-14). Of course, Jewish people have been coming back to the land, especially since Israel declared its statehood in 1948. They have been coming back in unbelief just as Ezekiel said they would (Ezek. 36:24-26).
- Many in the nation will return to their ancient worship system, which was centered in the Jerusalem temple and which involved animal sacrifices. When they rebuild the temple is not revealed.

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EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION: THE FIRST HALF

- The Scriptures simply inform us that at the midpoint of the Tribulation the temple exists and the Levitical sacrificial system is in place (cf. Daniel 9:27; Matt. 24:15), but it does not tell us how long it has been going on.
- During the first half of the Tribulation Israel will be living in peace and safety because of the covenant they have made with the powerful Western leader, who is the Antichrist. He is able to guarantee their security, and they will live in relative peace in spite of many terrible things happening elsewhere in the world.

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EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION: THE FIRST HALF

Religions Of The World

- **First**, as we have just noted, there is a return by the nation of Israel to its ancient Levitical worship system.
- **Second**, in the absence of any indication to the contrary, it seems safe to assume that all the other major religions and cults of the world will continue to exist during the first half of the Tribulation.
- **Third**, and apostate church (in absence of the true church of Jesus Christ) grows in power and influence.
- Revelation 17 reveals information about an unfaithful woman (a harlot). This designation is in contrast to a faithful bride and suggests one who claims loyalty to Christ, but is unfaithful.

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EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION: THE FIRST HALF

- This religious system (the harlot) is a politically powerful, wealthy, and aggressive persecutor of true believers.
- During the first half of the Tribulation, there is a close connection between this apostate church and the Antichrist, since she is seen riding on the beast.
- **Revelation 17:3 (NKJV)** So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.
- This may even indicate that the woman (the apostate church) actually has control of the Antichrist for a period of time. In any case, there will be a close connection exists between religion and politics.

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EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION: THE FIRST HALF

- The apostate church is not only politically influential but very wealthy and very blasphemous.
- **Revelation 17:4-5 (NKJV)** The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.
- Use of the plural (**MOTHER OF HARLOTS**) would suggest that this religious system is ecumenical.
- It is quite clear that this religious system is responsible for the death of many true believers in Christ during those days.

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- **Revelation 17:6 (NKJV)** I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.
- The apostate church will itself come to a violent end at the hand of the Antichrist and his followers.
- **Revelation 17:15-17 (NKJV)** Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.

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- This ecumenical religious system is apparently centered in Rome, since it is identified with the city that was ruling the world in the apostle John's day.
- Revelation 17:7-9 (NKJV) **But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. "Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.**

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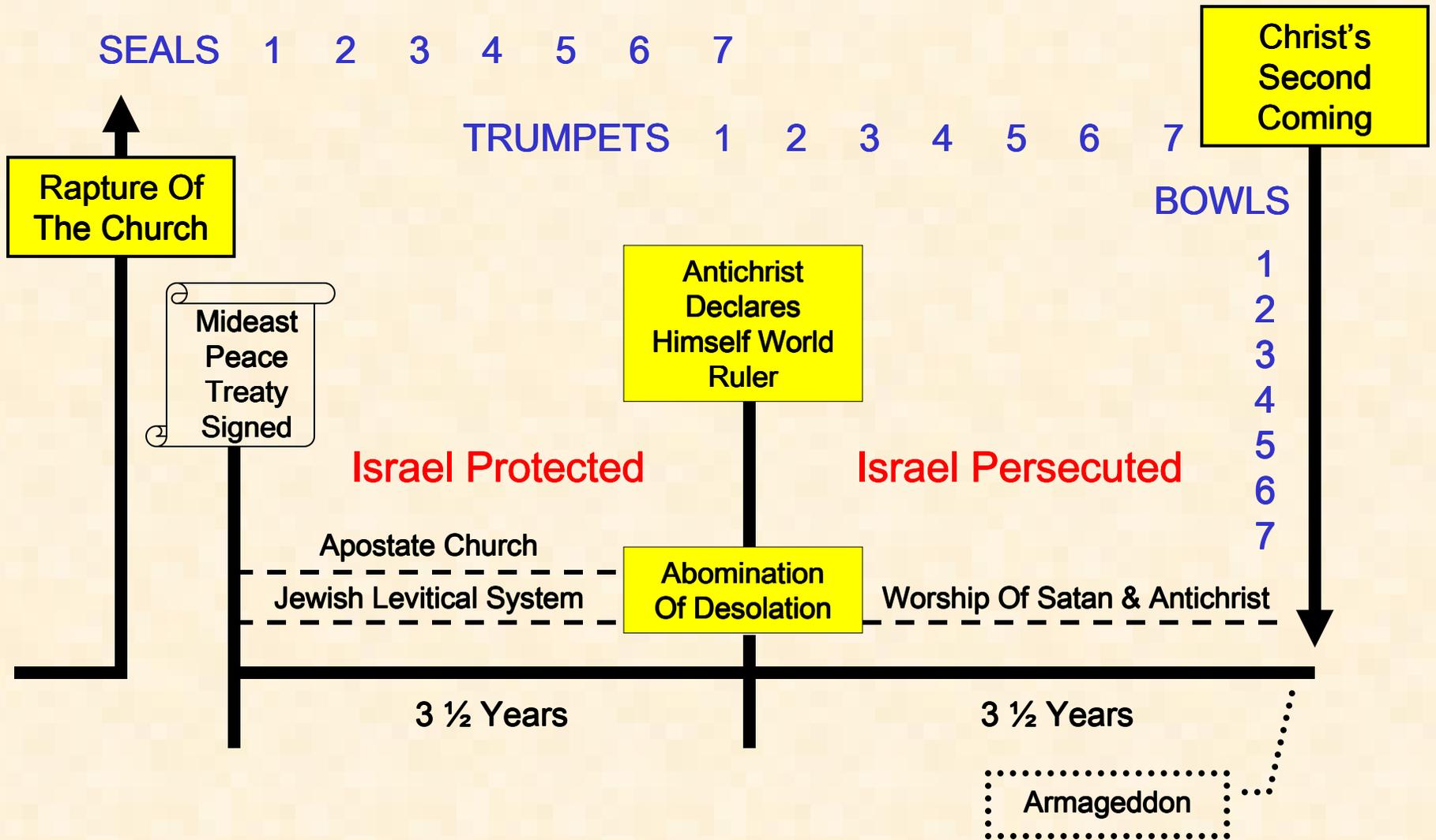
EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION: THE FIRST HALF

- This system cannot exist past the middle of the Tribulation, since at the midpoint the Antichrist will require worship from all people. It seems probable that its destruction will come at about that time.

The Activities Of The Antichrist

- As we learned in our prior studies, the Tribulation begins when the Antichrist signs a covenant with the nation of Israel guaranteeing their safety.
- After that he consolidates his power over the ten other Western nations (the revived Roman empire) and rules for most of the first 3 ½ years. With this power, he is able to function well as Israel's protector.

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EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION: THE FIRST HALF

The Judgments Of God

- God's judgments begin when Christ breaks the seals on the scroll (Rev. 5:1-6:1).
- **Revelation 5:1-4 (NKJV)** *And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.*

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- **Revelation 5:5-8 (NKJV)** But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.” And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

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EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION: THE FIRST HALF

- **Revelation 5:9-12 (NKJV)** *And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.”* Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

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- **Revelation 5:13-14 (NKJV)** *And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”* Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.
- **Revelation 6:1 (NKJV)** *Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.”*
- It is likely that John’s invitation to “**come and see**” corresponds with the rapture of the church.

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EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION: THE FIRST HALF

- It is probable that the first six seal judgments take place during the first half of the Tribulation especially since they are described by Christ as the “**beginning of birth pangs**” (Matt. 24:8).
- In Matthew 24:4-8, Jesus spoke of judgments that will be found in the first half of the Tribulation – famines, earthquakes, false messiahs, wars and persecutions. This general description of judgment appears to parallel what John describes as the seal judgments (Rev. 6:2-17).
- Let us investigate the words of Jesus, and then look for parallels in John’s description of the seal judgments.

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EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION: THE FIRST HALF

- Matthew 24:4-9 (NKJV) And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. “**Then** they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.
- The “**then**” in verse 9 leads us into the second half of the Tribulation (I.e. when Israel is persecuted). Thus, the events described in verses 4-8 occur during the first half.

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EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION: THE FIRST HALF

- **SEAL # 1: The Conqueror**
- **Revelation 6:2 (NKJV)** *And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.*
- The Antichrist, the false messiah, appears and goes forth to conquer. Although no open warfare is mentioned, he does wear a crown, which is the sign of a victor.
- It may be that this refers to his conquering of the three kings and his subduing of seven others in the forming of the Western federation of nations (the revived Roman empire) revealed in Daniel 7:8, 20-24.

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EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION: THE FIRST HALF

- **SEAL # 2: Conflict On Earth**
- **Revelation 6:3-4 (NKJV)** When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come and see.” Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.
- With the opening of this seal, total, open warfare breaks out on the earth.
- The “**great sword**” given to the rider on the horse speaks of unprecedented conflict all over the world.
- This parallels Matt. 24:6-7.

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EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION: THE FIRST HALF

- **Matthew 24:6-7a (NKJV)** *And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.*
- **SEAL # 3: Scarcity On The Earth**
- **Revelation 6:5-6 (NKJV)** *When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."*

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- The rider on a black horse represents worldwide famine. This parallels Matt. 24:7b.
- **Matthew 24:7b (NKJV) . . . And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.**
- He holds a pair of scales in his hand, which was used for weighing food. The scarcity of food is evidenced in very high prices for grain.
- Famine is quite often the direct result of war. And since the wars are great, the famine will be great also and perhaps found in places where famine is not usually experienced.

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- **SEAL # 4: Widespread Death On The Earth**
- **Revelation 6:7-8 (NKJV)** When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.
- The breaking of this seal brings incredible destruction to the world’s population, as $\frac{1}{4}$ will perish in this judgment (over 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ billion people). These four agents of death are specifically said to be God’s “**four severe judgments**” in Ezekiel 14:21.

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- **SEAL # 5: The Cry of the Martyrs**
- **Revelation 6:9-11 (NKJV)** When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.
- This seal is different from the others because it focuses on the death of believers during these days.

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- These believers have been martyred because of their loyalty to the Lord and His Word.
- Many people will come to faith in Christ during those first years of the Tribulation, but few will make it through alive.
- The Holy Spirit will be very active during the days of the Tribulation, since it is He who regenerates people.
- The Holy Spirit is not removed from the world at the Rapture event, as some have taught. It is only His ministry of restraining sin that is removed.
- **2 Thessalonians 2:7 (NKJV)** For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.

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- **SEAL #6: Cosmic Disturbances**
- **Revelation 6:12-17 (NKJV)** I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

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- This seal is probably broken near the middle of the Tribulation (and may introduce the final 3 ½ years – the Great Tribulation).
- It brings amazing and powerful upheavals on the earth and in the heavens.
- So great are these events that a terrified humanity cries out to the rocks and mountains to hide them from the wrath of God.

The Beginning Of Birth Pangs

- These seal judgments are said to be the “**beginning of birth pangs**” (Matt. 24:8).
- The term birth pangs is used to describe the judgments of God throughout the entire Tribulation and suggests a number of things about God’s judgments in the Tribulation.

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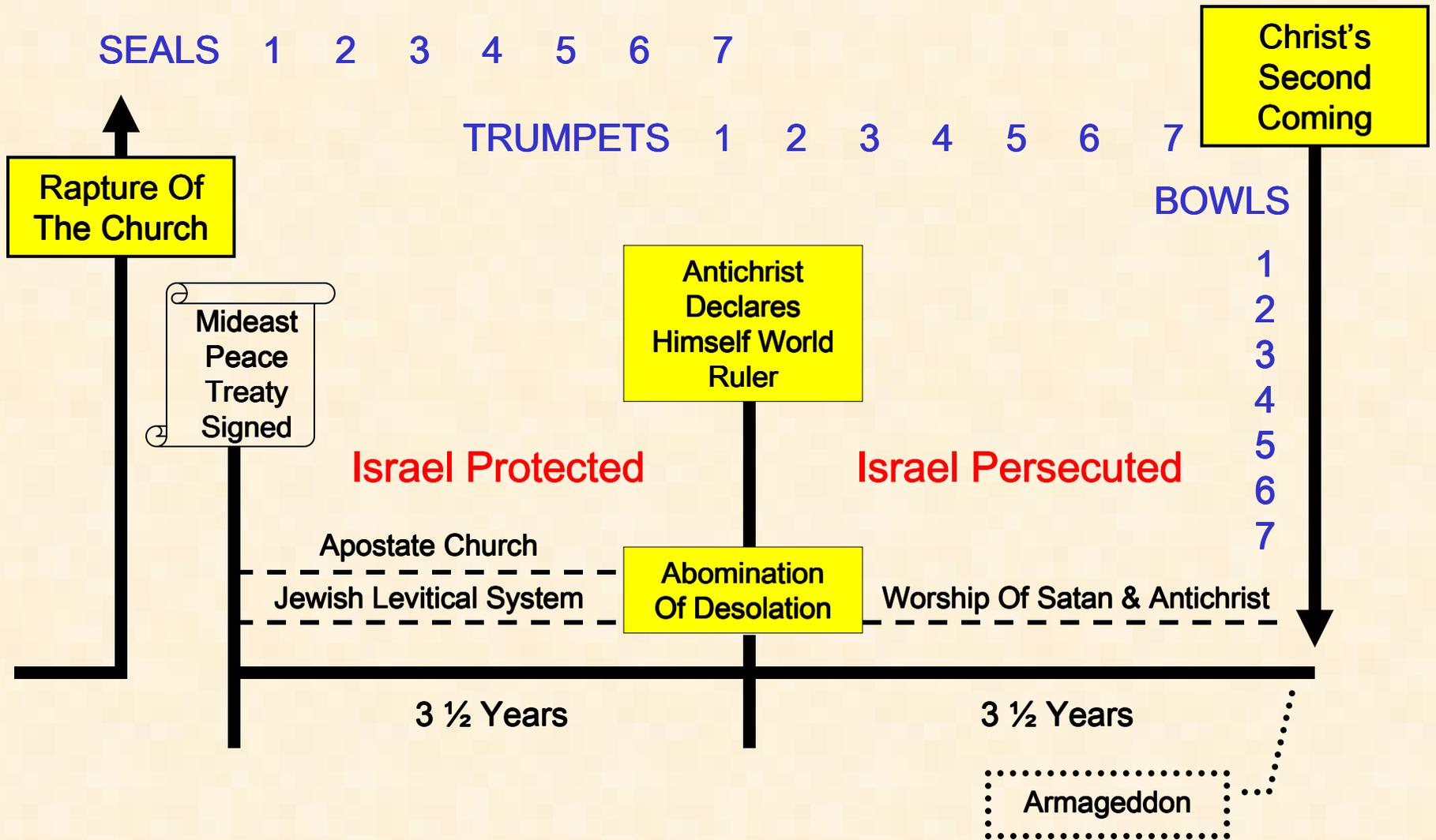
- **First**, birth pangs are unique pains. The world has always experienced the pains of war, famine, and disease, but these pains will be unique because of their intensity and location.
- **Second**, once birth pangs begin, they do not end until the baby is born. So also, once the Tribulation judgments begin, they will not stop until the kingdom of the Messiah is born.
- **Third**, birth pangs become more intense as the time for birth draws near. The judgments of the Tribulation become more severe as the period proceeds.
- **Fourth**, birth pangs come closer and closer together as time goes on. The judgments of the Tribulation appear to have greater amounts of time between them toward the beginning, but come closer together as the 2nd Coming approaches.

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- With months between each seal, people may see them as natural, though terrible, events.
- **Fifth**, in both cases, when the birth pangs have run their course, new life is experienced. This will indeed be the case at the 2nd Coming of Christ.

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EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION: THE FIRST HALF APPLICATION

- Israel's growing plans to rebuild the Temple should excite us in that the stage is being set for the rapture of the church. This should cause us to be looking for His appearing.
- **Titus 2:11-13 (NKJV)** For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,
- The growing apostasy and ecumenical spirit in the worldwide church is another indication that the rapture may be soon.

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- **2 Timothy 4:3-5 (NKJV)** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.
- We need to be alert to false teaching and the ecumenical spirit that pervades the church today.
- We need to be watching and looking (in the news, etc.) for evidence that stage is being set for the rapture and the Tribulation.