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Tribulation Timeline: When Shall These Things Be? (Part 4)

"And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?"
(Matthew 24:3).

by Tom Stewart
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The Seven Vial Judgments

1. The 1st Vial Judgment is the vial, or bowl, which begins the pouring out of "the wrath of God upon the earth" (Revelation 16:1). A foul and painful sore is poured out upon those who have the Mark of the Beast and worship him. "And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image" (Revelation 16:1-2).

a. It is evident that the 1st Vial Judgment must be at the End of the Week because they are called the "seven last plagues" (Revelation 15:1), and "the mark of the beast" (Revelation 16:2) is already present. The reception of the Mark of the Beast qualifies the recipient for "the wine of the wrath of God" (Revelation 14:10).

b. Further, since the "everlasting Gospel" (Revelation 14:6)-- the Good News that men can still repent and turn in faith to the Living God (Acts 26:20)-- is still being preached, repentance must still be possible for those to whom God will give "repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth" (2 Timothy 2:25).

c. Additionally, "there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image" (Revelation 16:2). The word "and" indicates two conditions that must be present for the 1st Vial Judgment's "noisome and grievous sore" to target an individual: having possessed the Mark of the Beast, and worshipping ("worshipped" King James Version, in the Greek is present tense) the Beast.

d. The Mark of the Beast has God's twofold promise of wrath and eternal torment. This is not to proceed from the Beast, but from an Angry God-- "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb" (Revelation 14:9-10).

e. In spite of this twofold promise of divine wrath and eternal torment, a Merciful God still

waits for the repentance of whosoever will. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). However, no one should presume upon God's grace to think that they will necessarily repent after receiving the Mark of the Beast! "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Hebrews 10:26-27).

f. A "noisome and grievous sore" (Revelation 16:2) is a loathsome and painful ulcerated wound. It would be fearful to speculate as to the exact nature of the "sore" that God will deem appropriate to deliver in His last group of judgments against the Beast's followers.

g. The Vial Judgments follow the sounding of the 7th and Last Trump. The 7th angel sounds his trumpet in Revelation 11:15, while the Vial Judgments occur in Chapter 16. This will probably correspond to Tishri 1, 5766, which is Old Testament Israel's Feast of Trumpets (modern Israel's Rosh HaShanah)-- corresponding to Tuesday, October 4, 2005 AD. That will allow for about 8 to 9 days to pour out the Vial Judgments and to complete the Tribulation Week, which ends on Tishri 9, 5766 (October 12, 2005 AD). This allows for about one judgment every day.

2. The 2nd Vial Judgment is where the angel of the Most High God pours out a vial upon the sea, which turns it to blood. Consequently, all sea life dies. "And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea" (Revelation 16:3).

a. Another indication that this is the end of Daniel's Seventieth Week is that "every living soul died in the sea" (Revelation 16:3). How long can the planet's ecosystems survive, when everything in the sea is dead? Without deep speculation, not long.

b. Remember that this is the second time in the Tribulation Week that the planet's oceans and seas have been targeted, by God, to judge man. The other time was the 2nd Trumpet Judgment (Revelation 8:9). That was most likely a regional ecological catastrophe. Killing 1/3 of the sea's animals is disastrous. Killing all sea life is world-ending.

3. The 3rd Vial Judgment is God's judgment upon fresh water and its sources. An angel pours out the vial upon all fresh water. It all becomes blood. "And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O LORD, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because Thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, LORD God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments" (Revelation 16:4-7).

a. Without fresh water, human life is limited to only a matter of days. Deprive a human being of oxygen, then he has only minutes to live. If you expose a person to extreme cold, then he may survive only a matter of hours. Deprived of water, someone may survive for days. Without food, the agony of life can go on for weeks. Truly, it can be said of our Just and Longsuffering God: "The LORD is known by the judgment which He executeth: the wicked is snared in the

work of his own hands" (Psalm 9:16).

b. An angel pours out this 3rd Vial Judgment upon all fresh water-- life ending, but still leaving time to repent-- while "the angel of the waters" (Revelation 16:5) justifies God's actions. He says that "they are worthy" (16:6b) to drink blood, because "they have shed the blood of saints and prophets" (16:6a).

c. What "saints and prophets" (Revelation 16:6) did they kill? The 5th Seal Judgment (Revelation 6:9-11) recounts how "they" (16:6) aided and abetted in the murder of the Saints because of "the testimony which they held" (6:9). By the Middle of the Tribulation Week, "they" (16:6) were complicit with Antichrist's slaughter of all those who "would not worship the image of the beast" (Revelation 13:15). And now near the End of the Week, just a few days earlier, "they" (16:6) rejoiced and made merry over the lifeless bodies of God's Two Witnesses-- Moses and Elijah-- for 3 1/2 days, that Antichrist had just slain (Revelation 11:7-10).

d. Sowing and reaping. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). There is nothing arbitrary about God's judgments. His judgment is just and righteous.

4. The 4th Vial Judgment is the pouring out of a vial on the sun. The result is the scorching of mankind with great heat. Without repentance, man's actions are predictable. They will blaspheme the very God, who controls the plague, that gives them their torment. "And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, Which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give Him glory" (Revelation 16:8-9).

a. A first-degree burn is only redness, mild swelling, and stinging pain. Cold water is most often recommended for the first aid treatment of simple burns. Question. What water is available to treat these more serious, scorching burns? Didn't the angel just turn all the fresh water to blood in the 3rd Vial Judgment (Revelation 16:4) about a day earlier?

b. Turn the water to blood, then scorch the flesh by the heat of the sun. A divine design is clearly evidenced in God's judgments. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

c. God, "the Judge of all" (Hebrews 12:23), will complete the process of hardening and (ultimately) judging the sinner. "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Romans 2:5-6). Or, He will lead the, finally contrite, sinner to repentance. "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4).

d. At no place during the Seven Vial Judgments of the last 8 to 9 days of the Tribulation Week (Revelation 16), do we have any indication that anyone on planet earth has repented of their

rebellion against God. In fact, it is clearly stated that "they repented not" (16:9). Who can honestly blame God for the severity of His judgments in light of the history of man's obstinacy and rebellion?

5. The 5th Vial Judgment is a painful darkness that the 5th angel pours out upon the kingdom of the Antichrist. "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, And blasphemed the God of Heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds" (Revelation 16:10-11).

a. The "seat of the beast" (Revelation 16:10) is the seat of Antichrist's government-- his throne. Jerusalem is not just the center of attention for three major religions-- Christianity, Islam, and Judaism-- but is "the center of the world" as far as Scripture is concerned. The people of Israel are said to "dwell in the midst of the land" (Ezekiel 38:12), or literally, "who live in the center of the world".

b. Jerusalem, not Rome, nor even a rebuilt Babylon, is the most likely candidate for the "seat of the beast" (16:10). Rome seems to be a headquarters for a United Nations Religion, even though San Francisco, California (USA), seems to be the place of initial organizing of a type of one world church. Saddam Hussein is doing some kind of rebuilding of the city of Babylon; however, it does not seem to have the significance, or attraction, of Jerusalem. Perhaps a portion of Jerusalem will be independent of the nation of Israel, and will function as a multi-faith capital to the world's religions with Antichrist's seat of government as well.

c. Darkness (Revelation 16:10) in this Vial Judgment will be painful. So painful that "they gnawed their tongues for pain" (16:10). What do we compare that to? Perhaps the fear of darkness-- which is real to anyone trying to navigate without a light-- is so great as to cause the gnawing of the tongue, which brings on "pains" and "sores" (16:11).

d. Again, they "repented not" (Revelation 16:11).

6. The 6th Vial Judgment is the 6th angel pouring out a vial upon the Euphrates River to prepare the way for the Kings of the East-- and the rest of the world-- for the Battle of Armageddon. "And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Revelation 16:12-16).

a. Preparation for the Battle of Armageddon occurs before the End of the Tribulation Week; however, the actual conflict will not take place until after the Seventieth Week of Daniel is completed.

b. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall

not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (Matthew 24:29). The phrase "immediately after the tribulation of those days" means "immediately after the Tribulation Week **is completed**," and *not* "immediately after the Tribulation Week gets started".

c. What will happen "immediately after the tribulation" (Matthew 24:29)? The Second Coming of the LORD Jesus Christ will occur, on that day, immediately after the Tribulation Week. That day will be Tishri 10, 5766. This day is also known to Jews as, Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement. Our modern calendar identifies the date as Thursday, October 13, 2005 AD.

d. What about Jesus' statement: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36)? Isn't this verse the reason why we are not supposed to set dates for the Rapture? Not really. Actually, the context of Matthew 24 is referring to the Second Coming of the LORD Jesus Christ, not a Rapture. Notice the references in Matthew 24 to the word "come" in this passage: "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (24:30), "as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (24:37), "ye know not what hour your LORD doth come" (24:42), "in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (24:44), "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (24:46), and "The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of" (Matthew 24:50).

e. Even if Matthew 24 is dealing with the Second Coming of the LORD Jesus Christ, and not the Rapture-- as it does-- still, what about the statement: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36)? The word the King James Version translates as "knoweth" is used in the Greek in the present tense. The limit, of who may know the time and hour of the Second Coming of Christ, was only to the disciples that Jesus addressed at that present time, in Matthew 24.

f. Why wouldn't the LORD Jesus want those disciples to know the time of His Second Advent? Because He wanted their attention drawn to the Mystery of the Church, and its ensuing 2,000 year history of redemption to the rest of the Gentile world. In other words, it wasn't the right time for the Church to know and focus on that information, which was sealed up to the time of the End. "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4). Conversely, the Spirit of God is progressively divulging the understanding to the prophecies, on a "need to know basis," as we approach their actual fulfillment. "And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand" (Revelation 22:10).

g. Immediately before Jesus ascended back into Heaven, the disciples asked, "LORD, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Jesus responded: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power" (Acts 1:7). Jesus' answer has given some, today, the impression that it was not possible for the Church to know, in advance, the actual timing of the End Time events. He was only directing those particular disciples' attention to the immediate task of evangelizing the world and launching the Church 10 days later at Pentecost. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is

come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

h. The case for knowing the day and hour of the LORD Jesus' Return is built upon friendship with the LORD Jesus. He knows when He will return, and He is absolutely willing to share that information with His friends. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15). Only for a short time did Jesus set aside His heavenly glory, and voluntarily limit His knowledge of the future. Thus, He rightly stated that, "of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). That was then. But now, He is back in Heaven where He is using all of His divine power, as the Saints' Friend and Intercessor, to show them "things to come" (John 16:13).

i. The secret of what is about to unfold upon the world at the end of this age is given to the righteous. "His secret is with the righteous" (Proverbs 3:32). "Surely the LORD GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). It is becoming increasingly more difficult to build a case for ignorance of the timing of the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. If God could lead the Wise Men to the LORD Jesus at the First Advent, why wouldn't He lead the wise to the timing of Jesus at His Second Advent? "None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:10).

j. We were talking about the 6th Vial Judgment and its preparation for the Battle of Armageddon. To continue. Armageddon is mentioned only once, by name, in Scripture-- in Revelation 16:16. "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:14).

k. The scenario for Armageddon. The Seventieth Week of Daniel (Daniel 9:24-27) has all but completed, when the 6th Vial is poured out. Antichrist presented himself as God, to be worshipped in the Temple, at the center of the Tribulation Week (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The Tribulation Saints have been raptured at the 7th and Last Trump, approximately 8 days before the End of the Week. With all of God's people removed from the planet, the LORD God Almighty has the greatest liberty to deal with mankind.

l. Remember how the LORD refused to pull up the tares (weeds) out of His wheat field? Why? Because He was concerned about harming His own. The Tribulation Saints **must** be completely removed by a Pre-Wrath Rapture. "He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto Him, Wilt Thou then that we go and gather them up? But He said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into My barn" (Matthew 13:28-30). This describes the final harvest of the nations of the world. The Pre-Wrath Rapture (which is the final harvest of the Church) occurs before the separating of the sheep from the goats (which is the final harvest of all the nations of the world) (Matthew 25:31-46).

m. Antichrist represents "the kings of the earth and of the whole world" (Revelation 16:14). The "kings of the east" (16:12) are a significant part of Antichrist's army from the Far East. They are not his opponent at Armageddon. Who do they really think they are going to fight? Not each other. As much as they may hate each other, they are coming to fight the KING of Kings. Unreasonable? Yes. "There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD" (Proverbs 21:30). Still, if they won't repent, they must oppose the Living God. "He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth" (Luke 11:23).

n. Armageddon is the showdown between the LORD Jesus Christ and the Antichrist. In Antichrist's corner are all the weapons of the world, as well as Satan's lying wonders. "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9). The LORD Jesus is armed with only His person-- "and His name is called The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13)-- however, "out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Revelation 19:15).

o. The world is watching this engagement. "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him" (Revelation 1:7). The kings, which represent the whole world, and their armies will be there-- gathered by Satan's demons. "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:14). And all of God's angels will be there. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the LORD Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our LORD Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the LORD, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). And also, all of God's Saints will be there. "And the armies which were in Heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (Revelation 19:14).

p. Armageddon is more an event than it is a place. It is "the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:14). As a location, Armageddon relates to the Mount of Megiddo, in the northern part of Israel. It also relates to Megiddo, a city located in the Valley of Jezreel (also called the Plain of Esdraelon). Blood will flow thick and deep. 1,600 furlongs is about 200 miles. "And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs" (Revelation 14:20). The entire length of Israel will be a killing field-- but only for the dead bodies of Antichrist's troops. "And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh" (Revelation 19:21).

q. Though the Campaign of Armageddon lasts 5 days (Tishri 10 to 14), the actual Battle will probably take place in one day. When the LORD Jesus Christ begins to slay His enemies, it will probably be ended the same day. "And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the

winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Revelation 19:15). However, if an extra day is needed to complete Armageddon, the LORD Jesus could do for Himself what He did for Joshua-- give Himself an extra, supernatural day! "And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day" (Joshua 10:13). On Antichrist's part, just the logistics of amassing his forces will take a good part of those 5 days-- as well as the last part of the Tribulation Week after the 6th Seal Judgment.

r. The final outcome of the Battle of Armageddon is assured. Jesus will win. Satan will lose. "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season" (Revelation 20:1-3). Both the Beast (the Antichrist) and the False Prophet will immediately receive their eternal judgment, being cast into the Lake of Fire. "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Revelation 19:20).

7. The 7th Vial Judgment is poured by the 7th angel into the air. Thunders, lightnings, a great earthquake, a disappearance of islands and mountains, and a great hail result from this Vial Judgment. "And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a Great Voice out of the Temple of Heaven, from the Throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great" (Revelation 16:17-21).

a. A Voice from Heaven announces, "It is done" (Revelation 19:17). This is the voice of God. A solemn and steady announcement, that neither understates, nor overestimates, the preceding actions.

b. The worst earthquake that the world has ever seen will take place. "And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great" (Revelation 16:18).

c. This author believes that the "great Babylon" (Revelation 16:19) is the city of Jerusalem-- not Saddam Hussein's attempted reconstruction of Babylon. Jerusalem will be divided into thirds with this earthquake. The rest of the world's cities will fall. Simple, but apocalyptic. "And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath"

(Revelation 16:19).

d. Unrecognizable terrain seems to be a key aspect of this 7th Vial Judgment. All islands disappear. Every mountain disappears. Nothing and no one escapes. "And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" (Revelation 16:20).

e. If the Biblical measurement of a talent is equivalent to 100 pounds, what is left of the world is now being pounded with hailstones, each weighing about as much as a person can normally carry. If the populace won't repent, is it any wonder that their remaining strength would be used to curse the Living God? "And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great" (Revelation 16:21).