

THE TRIBULATION

DEFINITION

- The seven year period of great conflict and distress on the earth which is an expression of God's wrath against sinful man.

Jeremiah 30:7 ~ Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's distress, But he will be saved from it.

Daniel 12:1 ~ Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

Joel 2:2 ~ A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.

Matthew 24:21 ~ For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.

PURPOSES OF THE TRIBULATION

- Two main purposes exist for the tribulation period:

1. Preparation of Israel for its Messiah

- The Jews were not ready to receive Christ the first time so God will prepare their hearts to receive Him the second time
- God's justice and wrath poured out during the tribulation will make them ready to accept the One they have so long rejected
- This is the reason for the extreme suffering of the tribulation time – it will serve as God's discipline upon His people to bring them back to Himself
- The tribulation has a definite Jewish character since God must break the stubborn will of Israel to make them ready to receive their Messiah
- Through the horrible suffering of the Tribulation, God will remove the spiritual blinders from the nation of Israel
- When that happens Israel will become a believing nation and God will have fulfilled his promises with Israel (cf. Jer 31:31-34)

Zechariah 12:10 ~ I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

Zechariah 13:8-9 ~ "It will come about in all the land," Declares the Lord, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it. "And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The Lord is my God.' "

2. Retribution on the world

- God will pour out His wrath on the wanton sinfulness of individuals and nations
- People will be held accountable for rejecting the Creator and violating His instruction
Psalm 2:5 ~ Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury, saying,

Jeremiah 25:30-32 ~ Therefore you shall prophesy against them all these words, and you shall say to them, ‘The Lord will roar from on high And utter His voice from His holy habitation; He will roar mightily against His fold. He will shout like those who tread the grapes, Against all the inhabitants of the earth. ‘A clamor has come to the end of the earth, Because the Lord has a controversy with the nations. He is entering into judgment with all flesh; As for the wicked, He has given them to the sword,’ declares the Lord.” Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Behold, evil is going forth From nation to nation, And a great storm is being stirred up From the remotest parts of the earth.

Zechariah 12:3 ~ It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.

2 Thessalonians 2:12 ~ in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

Revelation 3:10 ~ Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

Revelation 6:15 ~ Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains;

TERMINOLOGY

Day of the Lord

- Refers to special interventions of God in human history
- Specifically refers to a future time when God enters human history to judge the nations, discipline Israel, establish the Millennial Kingdom, and eventually remake the heavens and the earth
- Broad aspect: entire Tribulation period
- Narrow aspect: actual event of the 2nd Coming and judgments associated with it

Joel 2:28-32

Joel 3:1-21

Zechariah 14:1-21

1 Thessalonians 5:2 ~ For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.

2 Thessalonians 2:2 ~ that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

2 Peter 3:10 ~ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

Tribulation and Great Tribulation

- Tribulation refers to entire 7 year period
- Great Tribulation refers to 2nd half of the Tribulation
Matthew 24:9, 21, 29 ~ Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name...For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will...But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Revelation 7:14 ~ I said to him, “My lord, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Time of Jacob’s Trouble

- Emphasizes the unique time of trouble for Israel

Jeremiah 30:7 ~ Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob’s distress, But he will be saved from it.

The Wrath of God

- Refers to entire 7 year tribulation since only the wrath of God could qualify as this “unparalleled time of trouble”
- Satan’s wrath and man’s wrath may be terrible indeed, but they cannot compare to the wrath of God

Zephaniah 1:15 ~ A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness,

1 Thessalonians 1:10 ~and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 ~ For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Revelation 11:18 ~ And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.”

Revelation 15:1 ~ Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

Revelation 16:1 ~ Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”

The Seventieth Week of Daniel

- Relates the time period to Israel
- Clearly identifies the length as 7 years
 - Dan 9:24-27 – divides it into two halves: two 3½ year periods (cf. 7:25; 12:7)
 - Rev 12:14 – “time, times, and a half a time” = 1 + 2 + ½ = 3½
 - Rev 11:2; 13:5 – 42 months
 - Rev 11:3; 12:6 – 1260 days

EXPLANATION OF DANIEL’S 70 WEEKS

Daniel 9:24-27

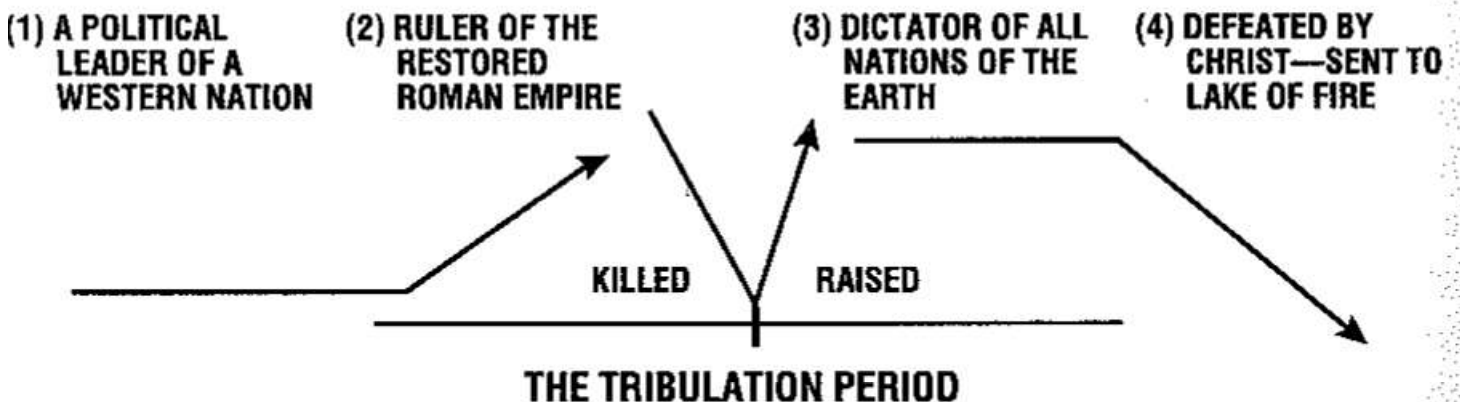
- Israel in Babylon in captivity, Jerusalem and the temple have been destroyed
- Daniel prays for deliverance (9:16-19)
- Gabriel gives Daniel vision of 70 weeks
- A “week” = literally in Hebrew “a unit of seven”
- Therefore 70 units of 7 years which equals 490 years
- 3 separate periods referred to in this prophecy:

- “The man of lawlessness” – 2 Thess 2:3
- “The beast” – Rev 13, 17
- A man of great ability who is closely aligned with Satan (Dan 7:8-26; 9:26-27; 11:36-45; 2 Thess 2:3-10; Rev 13:1-9; 17:8-14)
- Great leader, capable of solving complex problems facing the world
- Intelligent, with an understanding of economics and political matters
- Militarily powerful, great oratorical ability, capable of inspiring many to follow him
- Power to perform miracles and eventually to rule the world

2. Career

- At beginning of the Tribulation, he is the leader of some western nation (He is the “little horn” Dan 7:8 of the “fourth beast” Dan 7:7)
- Most say he will come from revived Roman empire – 4th empire (Dan 2, 7)
- Signs a covenant with Israel to guarantee Israel’s safety (Dan 9:27) – so he must be the leader of a country large enough to ensure Israel’s protection
- Begins to conquer other nations (Dan 7:8, 20, 21-26; Rev 6:2)
- Becomes a world leader through Israel and the 10 power confederacy (Dan 7:7; Rev 13:5, 7)
- Assassinated near the midpoint of the Tribulation but is restored to life and becomes an object of worship (Rev 13:3, 12, 14)
- Breaks his covenant with Israel (Dan 9:27)
- Rules as dictator of the world for 3½ years (Rev 13:5-7)
- Persecutes the Jews for the second half of the Tribulation and would have annihilated them were it not for direct intervention of God (Rev 12:6, 13-17)
- Defeated by Christ at the end of the Tribulation and cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev 19:20)

THE CAREER OF THE ANTICHRIST



* From Paul Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*

The False Prophet

- Called the second beast in Rev 13:11-18
 - “prophet” - whereas the Antichrist will be the political/military leader, the false prophet will be a religious leader – politics and religion will unite in worship of Antichrist (Rev 17:1-9)
 - Vs. 11 – “lamb” – he may come claiming to be the Messiah
 - Vs. 12 - promotes the power of the Antichrist and convinces the world to worship him
 - Vs. 13 – performs signs that counterfeit Christ’s
 - Vs. 14 – image will be made of Antichrist who committed the abomination of desolation and set himself up as the one to be worshipped
 - Vs. 15 – this image will appear to have life and will speak
 - Vs. 16-18 – will require a mark to buy/sell; without the mark won’t be able to buy
- Called the false prophet in Rev 16:13; 19:20; 20:10
- Apparently a follower of the first beast (Antichrist)
- Seems to be a religious leader, having the ability to work miracles (Rev 13:13-14) and cause worship of the Antichrist (Rev 13:12)
- Kills those who do not worship the Antichrist (Rev 13:15)
- Gives the mark of the beast – 666 – which is essential for buying/selling (Rev 13:16-18)
- His power comes from Satan and his authority will be delegated to him from the Antichrist (Rev 13:12)

The 144,000

- Described in Rev 7:1-8; 14:1-5
- They are Jewish people: 12,000 from each tribe of Israel (Rev 7:4)
- They are “bond servant of our God” (Rev 7:3)
- Saved Israelites, probably converted during first part of the Tribulation
- Probably they will be the primary evangelists of the Tribulation

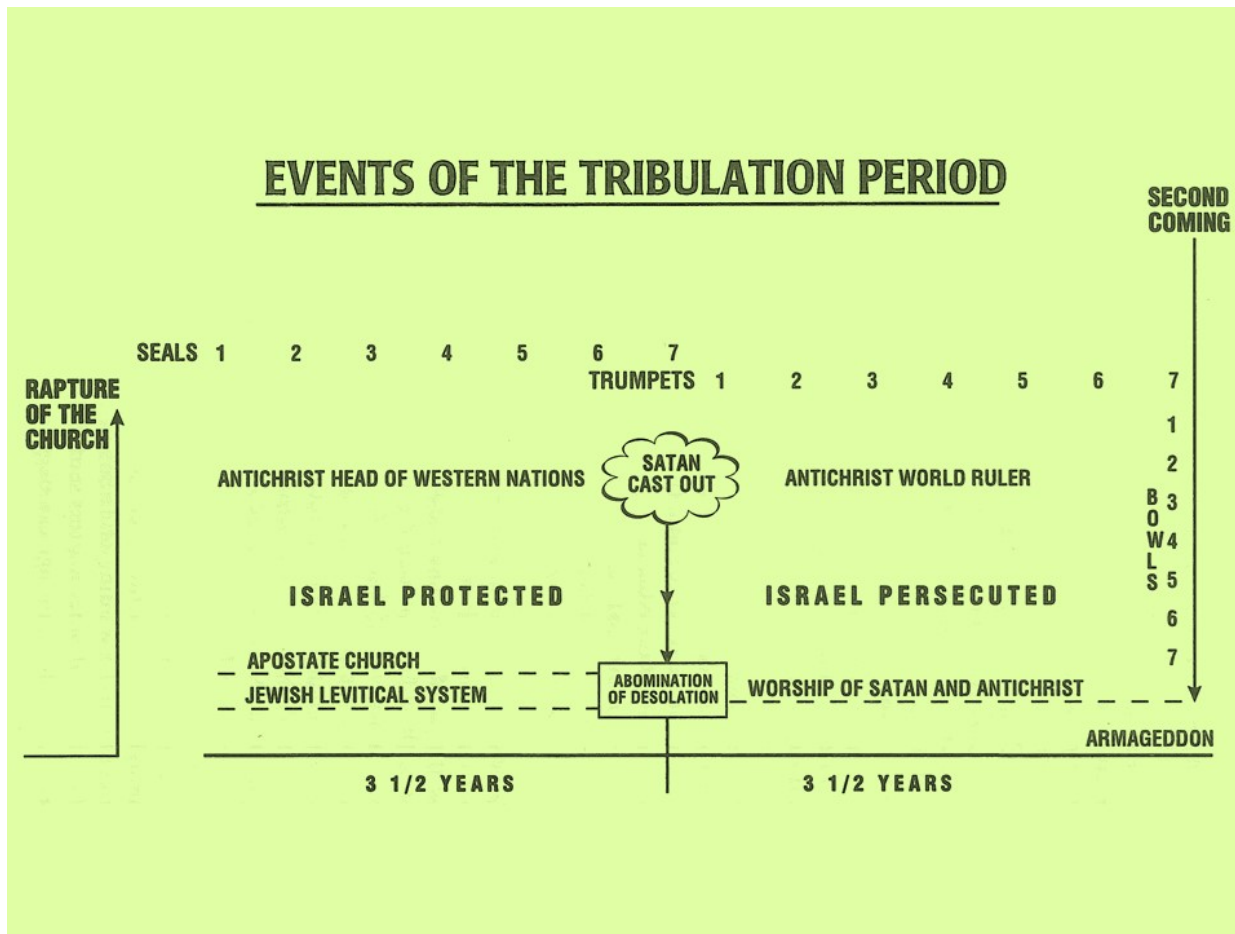
Matthew 24:14 ~ This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

- Possibly those described in Rev 7:9-17 are converts from the ministry of the 144,000
- They are sealed for security and protection (Rev 7:3-5, 8)

The Two Witnesses

- Described in Rev 11:3-13
- Given ability to work powerful miracles (Rev 11:5-6)
- Centered in Jerusalem (Rev 11:8) and preach repentance (“sackcloth” – Rev 11:3 – may indicate message is similar to that of John the Baptist)
- Uncertain who they actually are (some say Moses, Elijah, Enoch) – just two Jewish prophets
- Ministry lasts for 3 ½ years but uncertain which half of Tribulation they minister in
- Killed by the Antichrist (Rev 11:7); unbelievers rejoice (Rev 11:10); resurrected and ascend to heaven after 3 ½ days (Rev 11:11-12)

EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION



* From Paul Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*

First Half of the Tribulation

- Israel has returned to its ancient levitical worship system
- Israel will be living in relative peace with a covenant with the Antichrist.
- Apostate church (in the absence of the true church) grows in power and influence; Rev 17 indicates that there will be a close connection between the religious and political systems
- 144,000 Jews and many others come to faith during this time
- Seal Judgments (Rev. 6-7) are the “beginning of birth pangs” (Matt 24:8)
 - 1st - Revival of conquering political leader – Antichrist (Roman Empire)
 - 2nd - Open war and revolution
 - 3rd - Worldwide Famine
 - 4th - War, famine, disease, beasts (25% of earth’s population killed)
 - 5th - Martyrs killed
 - 6th - Disturbance in earth and heaven (probably happens near midpoint of Tribulation)

Midpoint of the Tribulation

- The Antichrist dies violently and suddenly from a fatal wound, but then comes back to life (Rev 13:3, 12, 14)
- Israel's treaty with the Antichrist is broken as he commits the "abomination of desolation" (Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15; Rev 13:14-15) – image of the Antichrist is set up in the Temple for worship
- Satan is cast out of heaven and thrown to the earth by Michael and the holy angels (Rev 12:7-12) and persecutes Israel and the world for 3 ½ years

Second half of the Tribulation (Jacob's Trouble)

- Great time of persecution of Israel (Matt 24:9-24; Rev 12:6, 13-17)
- Through testimony of 144,000 and 2 witnesses, many come to Christ, but are martyred
- Opening of the 7th seal begins the trumpet judgments (Rev 8-9, 11)
 - 1st – One third of the earth's vegetation burned up
 - 2nd – One third of the seas and all contained therein is destroyed
 - 3rd – One third of earth's water is contaminated
 - 4th – One third of sun, moon, & stars darkened
 - 5th – Five months of torment by locusts with the bite of scorpions
 - 6th – Army of 200 million destroys one third of mankind
- Sounding of the 7th trumpet begins the bowl judgments (Rev 16)
 - 1st - Sores on followers of beast
 - 2nd - Seas turned to blood
 - 3rd - Fresh water turned to blood
 - 4th - Scorching heat of sun torments mankind
 - 5th - Darkness
 - 6th - Euphrates dried up in preparation for Armageddon
 - 7th - Physical catastrophes
- Return of Christ signifies the end of the Tribulation and ushers in the events of the Second Coming