

End Times

The Great Tribulation – Part Two

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The writers of the New Testament spend a great deal of time, effort, and energy speaking about a turbulent time called the Tribulation. Other terms that are used synonymously with the seven-year period are the “last days”, “end of days” and, “The Day of the Lord”. The great debate surrounds the following question, “Will Christians go through the Tribulation or will they be “raptured” just prior.”

It seems odd that so much attention would be given to a subject that would not ultimately impact the church or the follower of Christ. In past teachings, I have indicated that Christ was speaking to the Jewish people when referring to the great tribulation and not to his own disciples. However, the Scriptures seem to indicate a very different story.

The phrase, "**the last days**," as it relates to prophecy, occurs exactly seven times in the King James Bible. Consider:

- Isaiah 2:2, Micah 4:1, Acts 2:17, 2 Timothy 3:1, Hebrews 1:2, James 5:3 and 2 Peter 3:3.

Furthermore, Jesus directly discusses the last days and the events that both lead up to it and are found in Matthew 24 and Mark 13. He provides the signs of the times and things that people need to look for to understand what is occurring around them. Interestingly, there is no indication, in either of the Gospels, that Jesus is only speaking to the Jewish people.

The last days (also referred to as the End Times, or the Great Tribulation, will be a seven-year period.

Consider the breakdown:

- These events occur before the second coming of Christ and it is a period where the Beast and the False Prophet display a counterfeit kingdom to deceive people, the nations and even Christians, if it were possible.
- This is a period of roughly 3 1/2 years or 42 months (Revelation 11:2-3)
- The 42 months or 1,260 days (see Revelation 11:3, 12:6) of the last or final period before Jesus returns, can further be divided into two relatively distinct pieces.
 - The first piece is about two years (24 months) in length
 - The second or last piece, biblically called, "The Day of the Lord" (Isaiah 2:12, Joel 2:11, 2 Peter 3:10) is about 18 months in duration.
 - Within the second part of the tribulation, God begins to pour out His wrath and judgement upon humanity because of their high idolatry and sinful and unrepentant nature.

Main Text

Both Paul and Peter describe the events that take place before the coming of the Lord. Humanity will be treacherous at this time, and there will be chaos and danger in everyday life. Jesus indicated that there has never been a time in history as this seven-year period, nor will there ever be again.

Godlessness in the Last Days

2 Timothy 3:1-5

¹But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:

²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,

⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

Peter also warned the church regarding the state of the world near its end when he said in 2 Peter 3:3-4:

³knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,

⁴and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

Events in the Last Days

The Bible lists several events that will occur that will lead up to the great tribulation and fully manifest within the seven-year period.

- Humanity will grow increasingly hostile towards God, the Bible and Christian principles in general.
- They will drift away from the Kingdom of God and fall into great deception and delusion.
- Christ predicts that because iniquity will increase, and lawlessness will abound, it will cause people to become cold in their faith. People will abandon virtues such as mercy, grace and forgiveness and adopt a rebellious attitude and lifestyle.

In Matthew 24:9-10, 12, we witness three things that occur simultaneously that impact the church.

Consider:

- People will depart the faith
- People will corrupt the faith from within
- People will grow cold in their faith

In the same scripture Jesus lists various events that will occur:

- An increased frequency of wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines, and calamities (Matthew 24:6-7).
- Deception will be rampant and many false prophets and christs will appear and deceive the masses with false hopes (Matthew 24:4-5, 11, 26-27).
- All these events that accumulate over time cause some believers to completely abandon their faith and fall away (2Thessalonians 2:1-3).

But why and how are people falling away if they have already been raptured off the earth?

A New Temple Will Be Built in Jerusalem

- In recent months we have heard of the rebuilding of a new temple in the nation of Israel. The Bible indicates that a new temple will be erected. This is part of the fulfilment of prophecy and prepares the way for the Beast and the False Prophet.
- Just before the public appearance of the Beast, the False Prophet and the Two Witnesses, the temple will be built.
- It will be in this temple that the, "abomination of desolation" declares that he is God in the flesh and will demand that he be worshipped by all humanity (Matthew 24:15, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4, Revelation 11:1-3, 13:8, 12, 15).

The Worst of Times

Why are the last days of man the worst time humanity will ever experience (Matthew 24:21)?

- During the great tribulation, a political and religious system will be in full operation, these systems will expand throughout the entire globe.
- People will be forced to choose between their faith, God, and these newly established world orders. It will be a time where people will have to choose between one or the other, and there are great rewards and consequences related to either of these decisions.
- The people that follow the Beast and make an intentional decision to worship him will pay a severe price. Although they will experience some benefit in the short term for following him, the long-term punishment will be horrific.

Consider Revelation 14:9-11:

⁹Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

- However, those that refuse to bow down to this demonic system will be spared eternal punishment but there will be a price to pay on the earth (Revelation 9:4, 18:4). They will be considered enemies of the world, hunted down and martyred (Revelation 6:11, 7:14, 13:7-10, 15). Again, many teach that this only applies to Jewish people and not to the believer and follower in Christ.

The Great Tribulation Begins

In a last-ditch effort at victory, Satan unleashes his final attack on God in heaven in hopes that he can dethrone the living God.

- Satan and his hordes of hell will be crushed and defeated. He will be cast out of heaven once and for all and thrown to the earth (Revelation 12:7-10)
- Satan's fury and wrath will be unleashed on the earth for a short period of time (1,260 days)
- Followers of Jesus Christ will have to endure incredible suffering and decide whom they will serve during this time:
 - On the one hand, Christians will be persecuted and killed in great numbers while others will be made to serve the devil's agenda
 - It will be the greatest period of trial and temptation the world has ever seen or will ever see (Matthew 24:21)
- However, some people will actually prosper during this time and will get rich. Those that make covenant with the Beast and the False Prophet and follow their political and religious system will enjoy the benefits; all-be-it for a short period of time (Revelation 18:9 - 19)
- The great city of Babylon will be erected once again. The Bible calls this city the "great whore".

Revelation 18:9-19

⁹"The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning,

¹⁰standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'

¹¹"And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore:

¹²merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble;

¹³and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.

¹⁴The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.

¹⁵The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

¹⁶and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!

¹⁷For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance

¹⁸and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?'

¹⁹"They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'

Satan Works Behind the Scenes

- Satan is fully active during the tribulation and works behind the scenes in order to frustrate the Kingdom of God and the work of the Lord in the earth. Satan uses his power to unleash the Beast and the False Prophet on humanity.
- The Beast and the False Prophet begin their work of deceiving mankind and ruling the earth under the direct inspiration of the Devil (Revelation 13:3 - 15).

The Two Witnesses the Angels & the 144,000

However, God continues to preach the Word of repentance through various ministries including the 144,000, the two witnesses and the angels.

- God's Two Witnesses are powerful individuals that are anointed, not only to preach the Word of God, but to demonstrate incredible power and judgement at will. After the completion of their ministry, they will be overcome by the Beast and killed, and their bodies left in the streets. The earth will rejoice over their death because they brought such misery upon them, but on the third day God will breathe into them and they will rise to life once again.

Revelation 11:3 - 7

³And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

⁴These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.

⁵And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner.

⁶These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.

⁷When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

God's People Are Protected

- Some (but not all) Christians are miraculously taken by God to an earthly "place of safety" or protection for the duration of the Tribulation (Revelation 12:6, 14, 13:5).
- They will be protected from the horrors of Satan's world-ruling government.
- Those protected in the last days will be kept physically alive until they are changed to immortal spirit beings during the short period of Jesus' Second Coming (1Thessalonians 4:16-17, 1 Corinthians 15:51-53).
- Please notice that it is at the last trumpet when Christians will be changed from mortality to immortality.

1 Corinthians 15:52

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the **last trumpet**. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

Revelation 11:15

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

1 Thessalonians 4:16

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (ESV).

The Mark of the Beast

Shortly after the Beast and the False Prophet established their one world political and religious system on the earth, they demanded that every human being received a mark. The book of Revelation indicates that the mark, which is the equivalent of a number 666, will be placed upon the forehead and upon the hand. Perhaps the mark is a literal logo or brand, or perhaps it is a digital imprint where peoples data and information is stored. The other possibility is that the mark is a figurative language indicating control and manipulation over their thought processes and their efforts.

- The mark indicates a covenant and a submission to the Beast and his new political and religious system, it is a form of worship.
- Anyone who refuses to accept the mark of the Beast will be considered an enemy of the state and will be hunted down and murdered for their rebellion (Revelation 13:14-17).
- Any person that does not accept this mark will not be allowed to buy or sell. In other words, they will not be allowed to participate in everyday life and within society. It will be very difficult for those that are upon the earth at this time. Once again, many teachers communicate that Christians are not on the earth at this time, but this raises a very interesting question. Who, then, would refuse the mark if it is not those that are worshipping the true and living God?

Revelation 13:14-18

¹⁴And he deceives those who dwell on the earth—by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

¹⁵He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

¹⁶He causes all, both small and great, rich, and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads,

¹⁷and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

¹⁸Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.

Martyrdom of the Saints

Prior to the ascension of Christ, He told His disciples that they would be witnesses unto Him in Jerusalem, Judea, and all parts of the earth. This word witness means, "martyrs". This concept is a central theme throughout the entire New Testament, the early church and church history since the resurrection of Christ.

- This would seem a star contradiction to the teaching of the pre-tribulation rapture
- Once again, the Bible spends a lot of time, energy, effort, and details describing a subject that many say will not impact Christians
- However, it makes much more sense the believers in Christ will be persecuted and will suffer because they reject the Beast and the False Prophet and their political and religious system.

Scriptures That Foretell A Time of Great Persecution

Matthew 24:9

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

Revelation 6:11

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.

Revelation 12:17

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 13:7-9

⁷It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. ⁸All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. ⁹If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

Revelation 14:12-13

¹²Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. ¹³Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

A Great Multitude from Every Nation

Revelation 7:9-14

⁹After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

¹¹All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

¹²saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

¹³Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"

¹⁴And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation; and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

The Tribulation – The Following Things Will Occur

Revelation 6:1-19:21 (This also coincides with the seventieth week spoken of in Daniel)

- 1) The Lord descends with a shout of the trumpet of God
- 2) The seven seal judgements (Revelation 6:1-8: 6)
- 3) Some believe that the church will be raptured at this time and the dead in Christ rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18)
- 4) The 144,000 are sealed (Revelation 7:1-8)
- 5) The Two Witnesses begin to proclaim the Kingdom of God and preach repentance (Revelation 11:1-12)
- 6) The Great Dragon, who is Satan, was cast out of Heaven (Revelation 12:7-17)
- 7) The seven trumpet judgements (Revelation 8:7, 11:19)
- 8) A false religious system of the Beast and False Prophet is initiated (Revelation 13:11-15)
- 9) The mark of the Beast is instituted – 666 (Revelation 13:1-18)
- 10) Seven bowl judgements (Revelation 15:1, 16:21)
- 11) Angels begin to declare the judgements of God (Revelation 14:6-13)
- 12) Armageddon, the Great Harlot, and Babylon are destroyed (Revelation 17-18)
- 13) The second coming of Christ - when He destroys the lawless one (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

Closing

Despite what would seem to be a negative and brutal ending to Christians, the opposite is true. Throughout the entire Bible, but especially in the New Testament, the theme of victory and overcoming ring loud and clear. It may appear that Satan, the Beast, the False Prophet and all these counterfeit systems win the day. However, these are all temporary and ultimately Christ wins, and His people overcome and defeat the darkness.

Revelation 12:11

¹¹And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

Revelation 7:15-17

¹⁵Therefore they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. ¹⁶They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; ¹⁷for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."