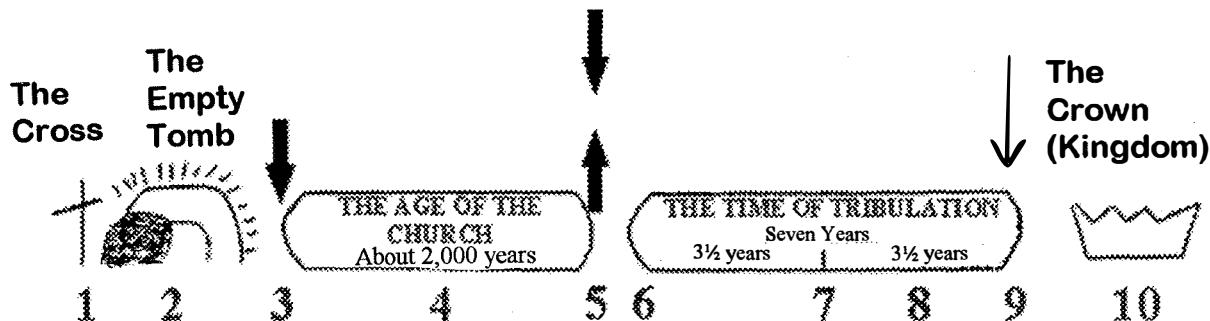


CHAPTER 11

THE TIME OF TRIBULATION

Shortly after the Lord Jesus Christ comes to take His Church to heaven, there will follow a period of seven years known as the time of TRIBULATION. This 7 year period is also known as DANIEL'S 70th WEEK (Daniel 9:24-27). As we will explain later, this is a week that consists not of seven days but of seven years. The last half of this seven year period (the last 3½ years) is often called the G_____ T_____ (Matthew 24:21), because it will be the greatest time of trouble that the world has ever known. Immediately after the tribulation, what great event will take place (Matthew 24:29-30)?

Here is a brief explanation of the key events beginning with the death of Christ:



The 10 items discussed below correspond to the 10 numbers in the chart above:

- 1 The death of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 3:18).
- 2 The resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:4; Romans 1:4).
- 3 The coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). This marks the birthday of the Church, which is the body of Christ.
- 4 The present Church Age during which time Jesus Christ is building HIS Church (Matthew 16:18) and calling out a people for His Name (Acts 15:14). (See CHAPTER 10).
- 5 The time when the Lord Jesus Christ will come down from heaven and the Church will be "caught up" (raptured) to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:13-18). This event is called the RAPTURE of the Church and it marks the end of the Church Age.
- 6 The beginning of the time of tribulation; also the beginning of Daniel's 70th week. This seven year period will begin when a covenant (treaty) is made with the nation Israel (Daniel 9:27).
- 7 In the middle of this seven year period the covenant or treaty is broken and the "man of sin" (the Antichrist) becomes the ruler of the world and demands that people worship him as God (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15-21; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

- 8** Jesus referred to these last 3½ years as a time of "GREAT TRIBULATION" (Matt.24:21) such as the world has never known. This will be a time of great Satanic activity (Rev. 12:7-12) and Satan's man will be the earth's ruler and absolute dictator (Rev. 13:1-10).
- 9** The time of tribulation will end when Jesus Christ returns to earth in power and great glory (Matthew 24:29-30; Revelation 19:11-16).
- 10** Jesus Christ will establish His kingdom on earth. This is often called the "MILLENNIAL KINGDOM" because it will last for 1000 years (Revelation chapter 20).

The time of tribulation is described in many places in the Bible, especially in Matthew chapter 24, Daniel chapter 9, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and Revelation chapters 4-19. There are many, however, who do not believe that there will be a future period of tribulation on this earth. They believe that the above passages of Scripture have *already* been fulfilled. But the events described in these chapters have never yet taken place in history. For example, consider some of the judgments or plagues that are mentioned in Revelation 8:7-12. When have such things ever happened? Never has the world known such plagues. When has a man ruled the entire world and been worshipped as God (Rev. 13:1-12)? When has the world been required to worship the image of a man (Rev. 13:14-15)? When have people been required to receive a mark on their right hand or in their foreheads, without which they could not buy or sell (Rev. 13:16-17)? These things have not taken place in the past. See our study **The Great Tribulation - Future or Fulfilled?**

The chapters mentioned at the beginning of the preceding paragraph must be understood literally. These chapters describe events which have never yet happened on this earth. Since these events have not yet happened, then this means that they must happen in the future. A dispensationalist, taking God at His Word, understands that these events will happen ***in the future*** (perhaps in the very near future) just as God has said.

The tribulation is not something that has already happened in the past, but it is something that will happen in the future. In Matthew 24:29-30 we learn that the time of tribulation will be ***immediately*** followed by the return of Jesus Christ to the earth. Since the return of Jesus Christ is a future event which has not yet happened, so the tribulation must also be a future event which has not yet taken place.

How does the time of tribulation fit in with the other dispensations that we have been studying. The seven year tribulation period is usually not considered as a separate dispensation. These seven years fall at the very end of the dispensation of Grace (the sixth dispensation) and just before the beginning of the dispensation of the Kingdom (the seventh dispensation). The seven year tribulation period is usually considered as the time of God's judgment following the age of grace.

The time of tribulation is a unique period of human history. God's Word has much to say about these seven years. Let us see how the TRIBULATION PERIOD fits in with and relates to all seven of the Dispensations:

1) INNOCENCE

During the dispensation of Innocence we saw man at one of his best states. Man was innocent, without sin, created in the image of God and placed in a beautiful garden where he could walk

with God in sweet, daily fellowship. During the time of tribulation we will see man at one of his worst states. We will see man's utter depravity and sinfulness. It will be a time of great iniquity or LAWLESSNESS (see 2 Thessalonians 2:7). It will be a time when God will pour out His judgments upon a world that has rejected Him. Will these people turn to the God of judgment and repent and seek His mercy, or will they refuse to repent (Revelation 9:20-21; 16:9,11)?

After Adam fell from his innocent state, man began sink deeper and deeper into sin. As we come to the last seven years (the Tribulation), mankind has reached the depths of wickedness. Satan will concentrate all his efforts on the earth (Revelation 12:12) and God will allow men to ***fully express*** their fallen and sinful natures. Man's heart has always been

"D _____ above all things and desperately

" (Jeremiah 17:9) but during the tribulation God will allow this wickedness to be expressed. During the tribulation we will see Adam's children at their worst!

2) CONSCIENCE

The Bible makes an important comparison between those who lived during the dispensation of Conscience and those who will live during the last part of the tribulation:

**"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also
the _____ of the Son of man be"**
(Matthew 24:37)

This verse gives a comparison between those who lived before the flood (during the dispensation of Conscience) and those who will live just before the second coming of Jesus Christ (the tribulation). Here are some of the similarities:

<i>IN THE DAYS OF NOAH</i>	<i>IN THE DAYS OF TRIBULATION</i>
The _____ of man was very great (Genesis 6:5).	The wickedness of man will be very great.
People continued their daily routines (eating, drinking, getting married, etc.) as they ignored God, left God out of their thinking and refused to listen to God's warnings (Matthew 24:38).	The same shall be true: People will continue in their godless ways: ignoring God, leaving God out of their thinking and refusing to listen to God's warnings.
God's judgment came very suddenly (THE FLOOD) and people were totally unprepared for it (Matthew 24:39).	God's judgment will come very suddenly (THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST) and people will be totally unprepared for it (Matthew 24:40-41 and Luke 17:30-37).

Those who perished in the flood during the dispensation of conscience carry a very important message for those who will be living during the tribulation just before Christ returns to the earth. Repent or perish (Luke 13:3,5)!

3) HUMAN GOVERNMENT

During the time of tribulation the world will see Human Government at its worst: A ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT UNDER THE CONTROL OF SATAN'S MAN.

As we think back to the city of BABEL (Genesis 11) we remember that men desired to UNITE together and become ONE (Genesis 11:6). The LORD knew that when sinful men get together and become UNIFIED, there is no limit to the evil they might do. Therefore God confused their language and scattered them and from this great event came the origin of many nations.

With many nations there is safety because there is a balance of power and one nation is not able to become all powerful. When all nations unite together, then there is great danger, because all the power will fall into the hands of one wicked world leader. What God hindered and stopped in the days of the tower of Babel, He will someday allow (though only for a short time). What sinful men tried to do at Babel will develop and will blossom during the last part of the tribulation. What the people at the tower of Babel failed to do, the devil's man (the man of sin) will succeed to do during the tribulation.

This great world ruler is described in Revelation 13:1-10. In this passage he is called "THE BEAST." Who will give this man his power (Revelation 13:2;12:9)?

Who will "wonder after the beast" and worship him
 (Revelation 13:3-4)? _____ Who will be able to fight against
 this man (Revelation 13:4)? _____ Who will worship him according to
 Revelation 13:8? _____ What will happen to those
 who refuse to worship this man (Revelation 13:15)?
 This man will be so powerful that he will
 control the world's economy (Revelation 13:16-18)!

Before God rules the earth (THE KINGDOM AGE) He is going to let man rule the earth (THE TRIBULATION). It will be a one world government under the control of a very wicked man. Can you think of any signs in our world today that might point to the fact that we are headed towards a ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT? (Think of the areas of transportation, communication, world wide web, world bank, etc.).

4) PROMISE

As we studied in Chapter 6 of these notes, God gave Abraham and his descendants (the children of Israel) certain promises. A faithful God will never break these promises.

During the time of tribulation we will see that God is faithful to His Jewish nation. God will deal with the nation Israel in a very special way, and at the end of the tribulation this nation will end up a WINNER! In Jeremiah 30:7 the tribulation period is called "the _____ of trouble." This will be a very difficult time for the nation which came from Jacob (the nation Israel). The devil and his ruler will seek to destroy Israel, but God will protect this nation: "he shall be _____ out of it" (Jeremiah 30:7).

In Revelation chapter 12 the nation Israel is described as a "WOMAN" and the devil is pictured as a dreadful "DRAGON". During the tribulation, who does the "DRAGON" try to persecute (Revelation 12:13)? _____ Is the dragon successful or does God protect the woman (Revelation 12:14-17)?

When Jesus Christ came to earth the first time, did the nation Israel receive Him or reject Him (John 1:11)? _____ At the end of the tribulation, when Jesus Christ will come to the earth the second time, will Israel turn to Christ and be saved or will the nation reject Christ (see Romans 11:26-27; Zechariah 12:9-11)

Throughout the difficult years of tribulation God will be doing a special work in the hearts of the Jewish people so that when Jesus Christ returns to earth they will be ready for His coming.

5) THE LAW

The time of tribulation will show man's utter failure to keep God's law. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8 the tribulation will be a time of great INIQUITY or **LAWLESSNESS**. The ruler of the world is called "that WICKED ONE" or "that LAWLESS ONE" (2 Thessalonians 2:8). The future ruler of the world will be totally opposed to God's holy law.

In God's holy law, the first two commandments (see Exodus 20:3-5) make it very clear that nothing should be put in the place of God and that only God should be worshipped. In God's law men were forbidden to bow down before any idol or image or statue or false god. The children of Israel broke this law when they made a golden calf and worshipped it (Exodus 32).

In the tribulation people will be guilty of the greatest act of idolatry that the world has ever known. A mere MAN will demand to be worshipped as GOD (2 Thessalonians 2:4). There will be an amazing image or statue of this man put in the Jewish temple (see Revelation 13:14-15). What will happen to those who refuse to bow down to this image (Revelation 13:15)?

Will the great majority of earth dwellers worship this man (Revelation 13:8)? _____ This will be LAWLESSNESS in its ugliest form.

6) GRACE

The tribulation will be God's judgment on a world that has rejected His grace. The greatest period of GRACE (this present Church age) will be followed by the greatest time of JUDGMENT (the seven years of tribulation). When men reject God's grace then there is nothing left but God's judgment. If men reject God's love then they must face God's wrath and anger.

The book of Revelation teaches us that there will be three series of judgments or plagues that will fall upon the earth:

- | |
|--|
| 1. THE SEVEN SEAL JUDGMENTS
Revelation chapter 6 and 8:1 |
| 2. THE SEVEN TRUMPET JUDGMENTS
Revelation chapters 8 and 9 and 11:15 |
| 3. THE SEVEN VIAL OR BOWL JUDGMENTS
Revelation chapter 16 |

These terrible judgments remind us of the plagues that God put on the land of Egypt in the days of Moses (Exodus chapters 6-12). One difference is this: in the days of Moses the plagues came only upon the land of Egypt. During the time of great trouble (the tribulation) the plagues and judgments will "come upon _____ the _____ to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Revelation 3:10). What will these people do when these plagues come down upon them? Will they wake up and turn to God? Will they repent and turn from their wicked ways (Revelation 9:20-21)? _____

Grace in the Midst of Judgment

Even though this time of tribulation will be a time when God will judge sinful men, it will also be a time when people will be saved. Even in the midst of judgment, God's grace can be seen. Even at the darkest hour of human history there will be a ray of light. God will reach down in love and save people by grace.

Read Revelation chapter 7. This chapter tells us about people who will be saved during this time of great trouble. How many saved Jews will there be (Revelation 7:4)?

_____ In verse 9 we learn about another group of saved people from every nation. How many were there?

_____ Yes, many saved people will come out of great tribulation (verse 14). During the tribulation, will there be any GOOD NEWS? Will there be any GOSPEL (see Matthew 24:14)? _____ Even an angel will be used to carry this GOOD NEWS to those who dwell on the earth (Revelation 14:6-7).

7) THE KINGDOM

Note: We will study this final dispensation in **Chapter 12** of this study.

The tribulation will come to an end as the KING sets foot on the earth and begins to establish his KINGDOM (Matthew 24:29-30). The time of greatest trouble will be followed by the time of greatest blessing.

Have you ever seen a thunder storm approaching? Everything gets very dark and then the storm begins and the thunder crashes and the rain pours down. In some cases the storm quickly passes and the sun comes out and everything is quiet and peaceful. There might even be a rainbow in the sky! This is the way it will be on earth after the stormy time of tribulation. The sun will come out (see Malachi 4:2). Jesus Christ will return to this earth. It will be a time of peace and blessing. It will be the most wonderful time the world has ever known. The worst will be followed by the best. GOD'S KINGDOM IS COMING (see Matthew 6:10).

A Unique Time of Trouble

The time of tribulation will be the darkest hour that the world has ever known. Our world has gone through some terrible times already. They have been times of terrible wars (including two

WORLD WARS), times of terrible disease, times of terrible persecution and times when wicked men have been on the throne. All of these things, as terrible as they have been, are nothing compared to what is coming. THE WORST IS YET TO COME! Planet earth has gone through many whirlwinds of trouble, but a massive TORNADO is on its way!

There are three passages that very clearly teach us that the time of tribulation will be the most difficult time the world will ever know. Please MATCH:

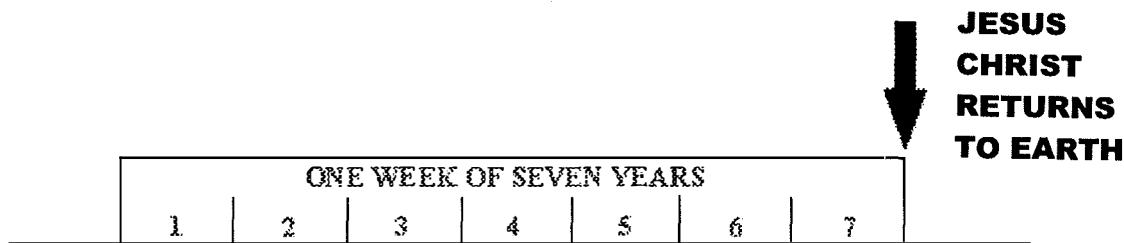
1. _____	"there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time"	A. Jeremiah 30:7
2. _____	"then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be"	B. Daniel 12:1
3. _____	"for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble"	C. Matthew 24:21

It Will Be A Short Time

There is only one good thing about this time of great trouble. IT WILL NOT LAST VERY LONG! The Great Tribulation that Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24:21 will only last 3½ years. This will be good news for those people who will live on earth during this time. God will not make this a long time; He will make it a short time (see Matthew 24:22). Even though it will be a very difficult time to live, the good news is that it will be over soon! It takes a person longer to go through a four year college program than it will take a person to go through the last half of the tribulation (3½ years).

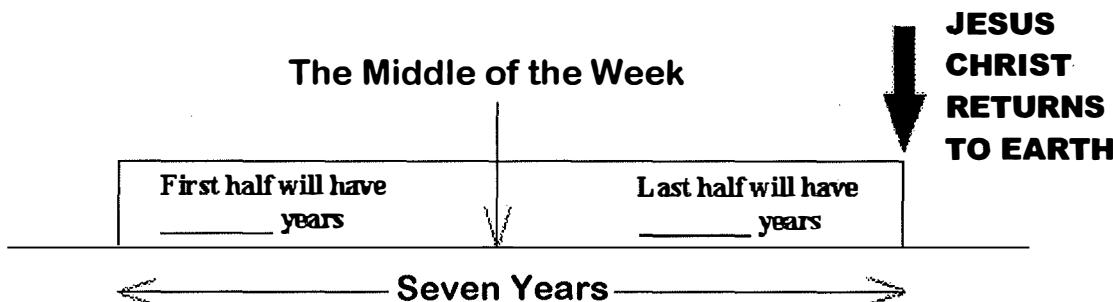
The Length of the Tribulation

In Daniel 9:27 the prophet talks about "ONE W _____." He is talking about the one week just before Jesus Christ returns to this earth. This is a very special week. Usually when we talk about a week we are talking about a time period that is made up of seven days. But Daniel is not talking about a week of days. He is talking about a *week of years*. When Daniel spoke of ONE WEEK he was talking about 7 YEARS. He was talking about the seven years just prior to the time when Christ returns to earth:



Jesus Christ returns immediately after these seven years are past.

Also in Daniel 9:27 the prophet talks about "the midst of the week." This means "the MIDDLE of the week". Remember, this week is made up of 7 years. If you put a line right in the middle of this 7 year week then you have divided this week into two parts with each part having how many years? _____



The time of Great Tribulation that Jesus spoke of in Mathew 24:21 is the last $3\frac{1}{2}$ years (the last half of this week). This time of great trouble will take place during the $3\frac{1}{2}$ years before Jesus Christ returns to earth. The Bible uses different ways to describe this $3\frac{1}{2}$ years period of time:

- 1) **1,260 DAYS (Revelation 12:6,14).**
- 2) _____ MONTHS (Revelation 11:2: 13:5).
- 3) "a time, times, and half a time" (Revelation 12:14)
 a time = 1 year times=2 years half a time=half a year
 What is the total number of years? _____
- 4) "a short time" (Revelation 12:12).

The Leading Characters

Who are the characters who have leading parts to play in the tribulation drama? They are as follows:

The Man of Sin (also called the BEAST and the ANTICHRIST)
 See Revelation 13:1-10; 2 Thessalonians chapter 2

The False Prophet (also called "the second beast")
 See Revelation 13:11-18

The Dragon (or devil)
See Revelation chapter 12

The God of Judgment
See Revelation chapters 6,8,9,16

The Nation Israel (also called the woman")
See Revelation 12

The Other Nations of the world
See Zechariah 12:9; 14:2

The Coming King
See Revelation chapters 4-5 and 19:11-16

There is one character who will not be found on earth during the tribulation: The Lord's bride, THE CHURCH. God has promised in Revelation 3:10 to keep the church from this time of tribulation and trouble that will come upon the whole world. Revelation chapters 4-19 talk about the time of tribulation, but in none of these chapters is the Church mentioned as being on the earth during this time. In fact, the word "church" is not even found in these chapters. Jesus Christ will come to take the Church to heaven before the tribulation begins.

Two Illustrations

1) *The Illustration of Enoch* (Genesis 5:21-24 and Hebrews 11:5).

ENOCH WAS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH BEFORE THE JUDGMENT CAME (the judgment of the Flood).

Enoch is a picture of believers who will be removed from the earth (raptured--1 Thess. 4:13-18) before judgment falls upon the earth.

2) *The Illustration of Noah* (Matthew 24:37-41).

NOAH WENT THROUGH THE JUDGMENT (the Flood) AND SURVIVED. Noah is a picture of those who will be saved during the time of tribulation and who will survive the tribulation and enter into the kingdom (in their natural bodies). Some of these people are mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 25:34.

Is There Any Hope?

There are some who teach that those who reject Jesus Christ before the rapture will be unable to be saved after the rapture. They say that those who have heard and rejected the gospel message before the rapture will have no hope of being saved after the rapture. They base this on the Scripture found in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 and they say that the only people that can be saved during the tribulation are those who had never heard the gospel before the rapture.

This is not really what these verses mean. The verses in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 are not talking about people who reject the truth before the rapture. These verses are talking about people who reject the truth *during the time of tribulation*. These are people who willfully decide to follow the devil's man (2 Thess. 2:3-9). These are people who reject the truth and accept the lie (the LIE that this man should be *worshipped!*). These are people who deliberately choose to take the mark of the beast and worship this man. If any man does this (see (Revelation 14:9) then what will happen to him (Revelation 14:10-11)?

During the time of tribulation those who willfully identify with the devil's man are DOOMED and DAMNED (2 Thess. 2:12). These verses are not talking about people who reject the truth in a day when the issue will be very clear:

MEN MAY WORSHIP GOD (Revelation 14:6-7)	OR	MEN MAY WORSHIP THE DEVIL'S MAN (Revelation 14:9-11)
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At the same time, we should be very careful to remember the following:

1. It is always very DANGEROUS to reject the truth, no matter when you live.
2. The time to be saved is TODAY, not TOMORROW. If you refuse to be saved today, what makes you think you will be willing to be saved in the future?
3. If a person refuses to trust Christ today when it may be easy (little or no persecution), why should this person be willing to trust Christ tomorrow when it will be hard? Believers will be greatly persecuted during the tribulation and many will lose their lives for their faith. Those who reject the gospel today are in danger of rejecting the Gospel tomorrow. The person who rejects the gospel before the rapture may be the person who will worship the man of sin during the tribulation. Those who are unbelievers today will probably be unbelievers tomorrow.
4. We do not want to think that God cannot save even those who at one time strongly rejected the truth. If a person will turn to God's Son and trust fully in Him and in His Word, he or she can be saved. Remember, God saved even Saul of Tarsus!
5. Be saved NOW! Remember, this time of tribulation that we have been studying in this chapter could begin in less than one year from NOW! It could even begin in less than one month from NOW! The RAPTURE could take place *at any time* and the tribulation period will shortly follow!

For more information see our study: Can a person who rejects the gospel prior to the rapture be saved during the tribulation?

If Christ were to come for His believers today (see John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) would He take you with Him or would He leave you behind? Are you sure that you are saved? Are you sure that you have eternal life? Are you ready to FACE THE FUTURE? If not, please talk to your Pastor or your Sunday School teacher today. They want to help you.
