

Thursday Evening Bible Study

Series: the End Times – Bible prophecy about future events and periods

Teaching Summary for Week 44

The Tribulation Period

Part 2. Overview

The Purpose of the Tribulation Period

We saw earlier that the source of the Tribulation Period is God, not satan.

Joel 1:15

15 Alas for the day!

For the day of the Lord is near,

And it will come as destruction **from the Almighty.**

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Rev 6:12-17

12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 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; 16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of **Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;** 17 for **the great day of their wrath** has come, and who is able to stand?"

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What is God's purpose in bringing about the Tribulation Period?

The scriptures reveal three reasons for the Tribulation Period:

1. To prepare the **nation of Israel** for her Messiah by chastening and purifying her.
2. To bring an end to **wickedness**, pouring out judgment on the unbelieving people and nations.
3. To bring about a worldwide **revival**.

Isaiah 1:24-28 is a great passage for understanding the purpose of the Tribulation Period:

Isa 1:24-28

Therefore the Lord God of hosts,
The Mighty One of Israel, declares,
"Ah, I will be relieved of **My adversaries**
And avenge Myself on My foes.
25 "I will also turn My hand **against you**,
And will **smelt away your dross** as with lye
And will **remove all your alloy**.
26 "Then I will **restore** your judges as at the first,
And your counselors as at the beginning;
After that you will be called **the city of righteousness**,
A faithful city."

27 **Zion will be redeemed** with justice
And her repentant ones with righteousness.
28 But **transgressors and sinners will be crushed** together,
And those who forsake the Lord will come to an end.
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1. To prepare the nation of Israel for her Messiah by breaking her power and judging her.

Jer 30:4-11

Now these are the words which the Lord spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah:

5 "For thus says the Lord,
'I have heard a sound of terror,
Of dread, and there is no peace.
6 'Ask now, and see
If a male can give birth.
Why do I see every man
With his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth?
And why have all faces turned pale?
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.**

8 'It shall come about on that day,' declares the Lord of hosts, 'that I will break his yoke from off their neck and will tear off their bonds; and strangers will no longer make them their slaves. 9 'But they shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.
10 'Fear not, O Jacob My servant,' declares the Lord,
'And do not be dismayed, O Israel;
For behold, **I will save you** from afar
And your offspring from the land of their captivity.
And Jacob will return and will be quiet and at ease,
And no one will make him afraid.
11 'For I am with you,' declares the Lord, 'to save you;
For **I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you,**
Only I will not destroy you completely.
But I will **chasten you justly**
And will by no means leave you unpunished.'

The key phrase here is “the time of Jacob’s distress (trouble)”. Jacob is shorthand for the nation of Israel, particularly when the nation is in need of chastening.

God’s purpose for Israel in the Tribulation is to bring about the conversion of a multitude of Jews (as well as Gentiles). This remnant will enter into the blessings of the kingdom, and experience the fulfillment of all of the Lord’s unconditional covenants with Israel.

2. To bring an end to wickedness, pouring out judgment on the unbelieving people and nations.

Jer 25:30-33

30 "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.

31 '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."

32 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.

33 "Those **slain by the Lord on that day** will be **from one end of the earth to the other**. They will not be lamented, gathered or buried; they will be like dung on the face of the ground.

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Zeph 3:8-11

8 "Therefore wait for Me," declares the Lord,
"For the day when I rise up as a witness.
Indeed, My decision is to gather nations,
To assemble kingdoms,
To pour out on them My indignation,
All My burning anger;
For all the earth will be devoured
By the fire of My zeal.

9 "For then I will give to the peoples **purified lips**,
That all of them may call on the name of the Lord,

To serve Him shoulder to shoulder.

10 "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia
My worshipers, My dispersed ones,
Will bring My offerings.

11 "In that day you will feel no shame
Because of all your deeds
By which you have rebelled against Me;
For then I **will remove from your midst
Your proud, exulting ones,
And you will never again be haughty
On My holy mountain.**

3. To bring about a worldwide revival

Matt 24:14

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.

The results of this gospel preaching are described in Revelation 7:

Rev 7:9-15

9 After these things I looked, and behold, **a great multitude** which no one could count, from **every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; 10 and they cry out with a loud voice, saying,

"Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." 11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying,

"Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?"

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.** 15

Please note that these people are not the Church Age saints. These are the **Tribulation saints**. They come out of the Great Tribulation: the second half of Daniel's 70th week.

Part 3. The Chronology of the Tribulation Period

Introduction

Chronology refers to the time. When did (or will) this occur?

Chronology: For any event or period, there can be three aspects of chronology.

The first one is the **absolute** aspect. We can identify the absolute chronology of an event or period if we can pinpoint **the exact date** of that event or period.

The second one is the **relative to others** aspect (also called **external** chronology). For example, we can attempt to identify when the Second Coming occurs in relation to the Millennial Kingdom.

The third one is **internal** chronology. This pertains to **the order of events within a period**. An example would be the order of events during the Tribulation Period. It also pertains to **the duration** of the period. An example would be the length of the Tribulation period.

We cannot know the **absolute** chronology of the future Tribulation. However, there is one Old Testament prophecy that did specify the exact date of an event that would occur in the future. We will see this soon because the same prophecy also predicts events that are still future for us – the Tribulation Period.

The Bible does provide information about the **external** chronology of the Tribulation Period. We have already studied this. We know that it is still future, and we know that it precedes the second coming of Christ as well as the Millennial Reign.

And the Bible also gives us quite a bit of information about the **internal** chronology of the Tribulation Period -especially the Great Tribulation.

We are going to also study two important features of prophecy that come into play for the Tribulation Period.

The first one is the existence of **gaps** of time in between events in prophecy. Most of these gaps are indeterminant in length. We don't know how long the gap is.

The second feature of prophecy that comes into play for the Tribulation Period is called **recursion**. This happens when a prophecy or narrative describes an event or period in brief, and then circles back to give more details about that same event or period.

Genesis 1 and two are a good example of recursion.

In chapter 1, the Lord introduces the subject of **the creation of man** on the sixth day:

Gen 1:26-31

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 29 Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; 30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so. 31 God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Then in chapter two, he describes the seventh day. But then he **returns to the sixth day and gives more details about the creation of man**.

Gen 2

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. 2 By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven.

5 Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. 6 But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground. 7 Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. 8 The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. 9 Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers. 11 The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 The gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush. 14 The name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. 16 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." 19 Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.

22 The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

23 The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man."

24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

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Daniel's prophecy of the Seventy Weeks

If you want to understand the chronology of the tribulation period, you must first study the Daniel 9:24-27. In this astounding prophecy of the seventy weeks, Daniel gives an outline of the chronology concerning God's future plans for Israel.

There are two big reasons why this prophecy is astounding. First, part of it has already been fulfilled, and it was fulfilled on the exact day that Daniel predicted it would be.

Second, Daniel 9:24-27 provides the indispensable key to the chronology of all New Testament prophecy.

Dan 9:24-27

24 "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. 25 "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. 26 "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

27 "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

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