

The History and Significance of Premillennialism

Lesson #8 The Tribulation ⁰⁶⁵²

I. Introduction

“The prophet Daniel predicted that the Tribulation would last seven years. Seventy *heptads* or seven year periods were determined upon the people of God, the nation of Israel (Dan 9:24-27), which means seventy times seven (or 490) years. This 490 year period has three divisions:

1st 7 heptads (or 49 years), to restore the wall of Jerusalem;

2nd 62 heptad (or 434 years), until ‘Messiah will be cut off’ (Christ’s crucifixion – Dan 9:26); and then

3rd 1 heptad (or 7 final years) that have not yet been fulfilled.

70 heptads 490 years (Note: slight reformatting for clarity)

Israel has been on prophetic ‘hold’ for almost 2000 years, but someday it will go through that final seven-year period.” **Tim LaHaye & Thomas Ice**; *Charting the End Times*; p. 58

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. 22Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.” Matt 24:21-22

All passages in this lesson are taken from the NASU translation of the Bible unless otherwise indicated.

Within Scripture there are at least 30 different ways to speak of what we generally refer to as the “Tribulation”. This is a time of great judgment on the earth, of great redemption upon the earth, of great destruction on the earth, and of great dying upon the earth. It would be good to learn most of these phrases so that you can see how often the Tribulation is spoken of in Scripture.

II. The List of Names Used to Refer to the Tribulation

Note: These titles are taken from the KJV of the Bible so they will differ somewhat depending on which translation you use.

The Time of Jacobs Trouble – Jer 30:7	The Day of Desolation - Zeph 1:15
The Seventieth Week of Daniel – Dan 9:27	The Day of Darkness - Zeph 1:15
Jehovah’s Strange Work – Is 28:1	The Day of Gloominess - Zeph 1:15
Jehovah’s Strange Act – Is 28:21	The Day of Clouds - Zeph 1:15
Day of Calamity – Dt 32:35	The Day of Thick Darkness - Zeph 1:15
The Day of Their Disaster – Obad 1:13	The Day of the Trumpet – Zeph 1:16
The Day of Their Distress – Obad 1:14	The Day of Alarm – Zeph 1:16
The Tribulation – Dt 4:30	The Day of the Lord – 1 Thess 5:2
The Indignation – Is 26:20, Dan 11:36	The Wrath of God – Rev 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1
The Overflowing Scourge – Is 28:15 & 18	The Hour of Trial – Rev 3:10
The Day of Vengeance – Is 34:8; 35:4; 61:2	The Great Day of the Wrath of the Lamb of God - Rev 8:16-17
The Year of Recompense – Is 34:8	The Wrath to Come – 1 Thess 1:10
The Time of Trouble – Dan 12:1 & Zeph 1:15	The Wrath - 1 Thess 5:9; Rev 11:18
The Day of Wrath – Zeph 1:15	The Great Tribulation – Mt 24:21; Rev 2:22; 7:14
The Day of Distress - Zeph 1:15	The Tribulation – Mt 24:29
The Day of Wasteness - Zeph 1:15	The Hour of Judgment – Rev 14:7

“Jesus predicted that, due to its severity, the Tribulation would be shortened. The reason the Tribulation will be a holocaust of major proportions is because it combines the wrath of God, the fury of Satan, and the evil nature of man run wild.” *Ibid.*

III. The Sequence of the Tribulation in The Revelation of Jesus Christ (not of, but to John)

Revelation Αποκαλυψις *Apokalypsis* (Str. 602) 18x meaning revelation or unveiling of the mystery of God's plan to include Gentiles in His people has come to pass.

Luke 2:25-32 *And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, ²⁸then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, For my eyes have seen Your salvation, ³¹which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, ^{Is 9:2} and the glory of Your people Israel."*

Eph 3:1-7 *For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles — ²if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; ³that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. ⁴By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; ⁶to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, ⁷of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.*

2 Thess 2:1-12 *Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ²that 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. ³Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. ⁵Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? ⁶And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. ⁸Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; ⁹that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, ¹⁰and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. ¹¹For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, ¹²in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.*

The Sequence of the Tribulation: (Ch 1) (Ch 2 & 3) (Ch 4-22)

Rev 1:19 *Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.*

The Things which will take place after these things. (Ch 4-22)

Events are occurring upon the earth and the causes come from heaven.

1. The Tribulation follows the Rapture of the Church in sequence. 4:1 is not definitive, but fits the sequence of the rapture in ending the Church age of chapters 2 through 3 and John seeing the saints in heaven. Consider the discussion in The New American Commentary; Revelation; pp. 148-150.

(4:1)

2. A description of the throne room

(4:2-11)

3. The dilemma of opening the book with seven seals and the glory and power of the Lamb who was slain is being worshiped. (5:1-14)
4. The horror story begins with the opening of these **first 6 seals** which represents somewhat common causes of judgment by God including conquerors, wars, famine, pestilence, martyrdom, and cosmic disturbances. Here is the actual beginning of the Day of Wrath, the Tribulation. (6:1-17)
5. **1st interlude** while the angels *seal the bond-servants of God on their foreheads*. These include 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel for a total of 144,000 Jews as the faithful remnant. (7:1-8)
6. A great harvest of redeemed men and women from the Tribulation period are found in heaven worshipping God before His throne. (7:9-17)
7. The **seventh and final seal** is opened from the book. This seal leads to the 7 angels being given 7 trumpets. The first 5 trumpets are sequentially sounded resulting in: (8:1-9:21)

1st trumpet sounded - hail and fire mixed with blood being thrown to the earth & 1/3 of the earth was burned up. (8:7)

2nd trumpet sounded - a great burning mountain was thrown into the sea and 1/3 of the sea became blood. (8:8-9)

3rd trumpet sounded - a great burning **star*** fell from heaven turning a third of the rivers and springs into a bitter source of water causing many to die. (8:10-11)

4th trumpet sounded – 1/3 the sun, moon, & **stars*** were struck to darkness affecting both day & night. (8:12)

(8:13) A cautionary warning in the form of an eagle flying in mid-heaven with three “woes” for the final 3 trumpets yet to sound. Three “woes” are warned of.

5th trumpet sounded - a **star*** from heaven fell to earth and the key to the bottomless pit was given to him with which this angel opened the bottomless pit from which smoke and locusts which stung men, tormenting them for 5 months so that men would seek death, but death flees from them. The first woe is past. (9:1-12)

* *star* ἀστὴρ *aster* (Str. 792) 24x meaning – “as with other words aster can be used both literally (referring to actual stars) and figuratively (using the image of a star to communicate something else).” *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*; p. 681;

- from which we get the English word asterism such as Biblical names for Orion, a constellation and Pleiades, an open cluster of 7 naked eye stars.

6th trumpet sounded – four angels bound awaiting are released so that they would kill a third of mankind. Armies totaling 200 million killing another third of humankind. The remainder third of mankind who were not killed, did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries, nor of their immoralities, nor of their thefts. (9:13-21)

(10:1-11:3) 2nd Interlude

- Another strong angel descends from heaven with a little book in his hand. (10:1-3)
- 7 peals of thunder spoke, but sealed up and not reported. (10:4-7)

- A voice from heaven told John to go take the little book which he does and is told by the angel to eat the little book. John is commanded to prophesy concerning nations and tongues and kings. (10:8-11)
- The two witnesses are discussed including their prophetic ministry, their death at the hands of the beast out of the abyss. Their bodies will lie in the streets for all to see for 3 ½ days and then they are resurrected and then raptured into heaven. A great earthquake occurs which will kill 7000 people. The second “woe” is passed. (11:1-14)

7th trumpet sounded – Christ begins his sovereign rule in the midst of the Tribulation. (11:15-19)

The nations were enraged and God’s wrath was coming for the dead to be judged. The temple in heaven and the ark of the covenant will appear with great lightning, thunder, earthquake, and hailstorm. (11:17-19)

John sees 7 key figures in heaven. They are:

1st The woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, wearing a crown of twelve stars. She is with child. This is the nation of Israel. (12:1-2)

2nd A Red Dragon having seven heads and ten horns, wearing seven diadems. His tail swept a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. This dragon seeks to devour the woman’s child. This dragon is Satan himself. (12:3-4)

3rd The Son is the Christ, Israel’s Messiah and Redeemer destined to rule the world with a rod of iron. Notice that He is caught up to God (Ascension & glorification – Rapture) God has prepared a place in the wilderness for the woman (Israel) to be nourished for 3 ½ years. (12:5-6)

4th Angel Michael and his angels are waging war with the dragon in heaven* and they defeated the dragon and threw them down to the earth. (12:7-11)

* Probably the atmospheric (first heaven) not in God’s third heaven.

Third Woe *Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.* The dragon sought to persecute the woman but the woman (Israel) was able to fly on the eagle’s wings into the sanctuary in the wilderness where Satan could not persecute her unto defeat. The dragon then proceeded to make war with **5th other children of faith** (the remnant) who obey Christ. (12:12-17)

6th - Beast from the Sea – Antichrist his description is one of blasphemy, arrogance, lust for power, devious, an idolater, a heretic who claims divinity for himself. (Dan 11:36-39) (13:1-10)

7th - Beast from the Earth – False Prophet here is the religious, miracle working beast who directs worship to the Antichrist and leads a worldwide religion of false worship and anger towards God and His Christ. (13:11-18)

(14:1-20) 3rd Interlude

Others that John now sees: the Lamb and the 144,000 Jewish Tribulation saints.

John sees the 144,000 Jewish saints on Mount Zion with Christ representing a remnant that God has chosen to save in order to fulfill all of His promises toward Israel. This may include other Jews saved during the Tribulation???. (14:1-5)

John sees an angel flying over the earth proclaiming the gospel and the warning to worship the one true God. A second angel follows the first angel warning that Babylon is fallen. (14:6-8)

John sees a third angel cautioning all men to not worship the beast nor receive a mark on their forehead or on his hand. Certain judgment will fall on any such idolater. (14:9-13)

John sees a son of man sitting on a cloud with a sharp sickle. An angel commanded him to reap a harvest of wicked men. An angel assisted with this harvest of wickedness and the men so harvested were thrown into the great wine press of the wrath of God. Blood came out of the wine press up to the horses' bridles for a distance of 200 miles. (14:14-20)

A Scene in Heaven Seven angels with seven plagues preparing for the distribution of these plagues upon the earth. (15:1-6)

The Seven Bowl Judgments are administered upon the earth. These 7 angels pour out the contents of the seven golden bowls upon the earth in 7 judgments. (15:7-16:21) These include:

1st Bowl Judgment loathsome and malignant sores. (16:2)

2nd Bowl Judgment the sea became blood and everything in the sea died. (16:3)

3rd Bowl Judgment the rivers and springs turned to blood. (16:4-7)

4th Bowl Judgment on the sun to judge men with scorching heat. (16:8-9)

5th Bowl Judgment on the throne of the beast & his kingdom was darkened and they gnawed their tongues in pain. (16:10-11)

6th Bowl Judgment on the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east. (16:12) This in preparation for the kings of the east to bring their armies to the valley of Megiddo in preparation by God to be slaughtered by Messiah at 'armageddon. ZPEB; Vol 1; p. 311; article "Armageddon". (16:12-16)

7th Bowl Judgment on the air with a voice from heaven saying "*It is done*" accompanied by lightning and thunder, an earthquake greater than any since man has been on the earth with other details of devastation. (16:17-21)

The Seven Dooms on Babylon (17:1-18:24)

1st Doom – Devoid of human life (18:4-7)

2nd Doom – Burned with fire (18:9-10a)

3rd Doom – Destroyed in one hour (18:10b-14)

4th Doom – People afraid to enter her borders (18:15-16)

5th Doom – Riches brought to nothing (18:17-20)

6th Doom – Violently overthrown (18:21)

7th Doom – All activity ceases (18:22-24)

IV. Conclusion

This terrible time of judgment upon men of the world and the destruction of this present world order and all of our institutions is preceded by the Rapture of the Church into the 3rd heaven.

This period of horrendous tribulation is followed by the actual second coming of Christ to the earth which we will study in our next lesson.

Our time is limited, let's declare the glories of God and the truth of our gospel compassionately and lovingly to the lost and dying world that we might have no shame or regrets when we appear with Christ our Lord at His Bema seat!