

## The Tribulation<sup>1</sup>

Let's preface the discussion of the events that will happen in the day of the Lord with a look at the tribulation period and how long it will last. In order to do this we will go to Daniel the prophet where we read:

**Daniel 9:24-26: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."**

These seventy weeks represent seventy weeks of years or 490 years. The use of a week to represent seven years is found elsewhere such as in Genesis 29:18,27,28:

**"And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also."**

It would take another complete book to fully discuss the entire body of truth contained in the 70 weeks of year's prophecy; however, what you would find is that 483 of the 490 years, or 69 of the 70 weeks, were accomplished by the time of the stoning of Stephen. Therefore, the tribulation will last for seven years with the most severe portion being the last half of 42 months or 1,260 days. Without understanding the *mystery* and the resulting interruption of the prophetic program, it would be impossible to explain why the last seven years, or seventieth week, haven't yet happened. It is clear from the Acts record that the finishing of the 70 weeks or 490 years was to be a continuous process:

Acts 2:16-21:

**16 "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;**

**17 "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:**

**18 "And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:**

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(By the grace of God this prophecy was interrupted by the *mystery*.)

**19 "And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:**

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**20 “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:**

**21 “And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”**

We know that the end can't come (i.e., the battle of Armageddon) until the gospel of the kingdom is preached in all the world and this will require Israel to be saved first before going to all nations. We find in Matthew 24:14: **“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”** We know that the apostles were told in Luke 24:47: **“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”** Also they were told in Acts 1:8: **“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”** Well, after the stoning of Stephen, a *great* persecution began against these efforts and to this day the gospel of the kingdom hasn't been **“preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.”** Stay tuned, however, and we will see how that will be accomplished in a miraculous way in the first half of the *tribulation*. As I did in the verses above, I have drawn a blue line, in my Bible, between verse 18 and 19 of Acts 2 and written: *By the grace of God this prophecy was interrupted by the mystery.*

Before we move on in our study, let's search the Scriptures as good Bereans<sup>2</sup> and verify that the gospel of the kingdom wasn't then and hasn't yet been preached in all the world.

Acts 8:1: **“And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.”**

Acts 11:19: **“Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.”**

I believe that the two verses above demonstrate that; 1) the apostles didn't venture on to the next step in the process that would take the gospel of the kingdom<sup>3</sup> to the world and there is no record that they ever did, and; 2) the Jews who were dispersed in the great persecution preached the word to **“none but the Jews only.”** So the gospel of the kingdom didn't travel to the world through them either. It's interesting that the Holy Spirit gave us these details, the meaning of which could easily be missed. Without those two details we would have to rely on historical evidence alone to determine whether or not the kingdom gospel was preached beyond Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Acts 17:11 **“These [Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”**

<sup>3</sup>The word *gospel* is best not used alone but along with kingdom or grace of God to show which gospel is being referred to, i.e., the gospel of the kingdom or the gospel of the grace of God.

<sup>4</sup>When Peter went to Cornelius in Acts 10 he was on a special mission, to Gentiles, and didn't go because Israel was converted and wasn't moving out based on the Great Commission.

Try to imagine the chaos that would be present in the world if millions of Christians were to disappear in an instant. Certainly, there would be enormous problems to solve in governments, businesses, private sectors, as well as churches. Amid all this confusion how will God restart the prophetic clock with no Christians to preach the gospel of the kingdom? Well, God has never before been without a witness on earth and He won't this time either. In Revelation 11:3 John is inspired to write what I referred to earlier as a *miraculous way* that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the tribulation: **“And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.”** We know from the same passage that they are killed, then raised, and then, midway through the *tribulation*, ascend to heaven. So, if they prophesied 1,260 days, that would place their arrival, in Jerusalem, at the beginning of the tribulation period. I believe that they will be preaching the gospel of the kingdom immediately after the *rapture* and the firstfruits of their ministry will be the 144,000 Jews from Revelation 7:4: **“And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.”**

Right on the heels of the 144,000 being sealed, seven churches will be established in Asia. It will be from this base that Israel will be saved and the gospel of the kingdom will be able to go around the world, to all nations, before the end can come. This will be possible, notwithstanding the Anti-Christ running loose, because he will make a covenant with Israel for one week (seven years). During the first half of this covenant the gospel will have a good opportunity to flourish. Daniel prophesied about this in Daniel 9:27: **“And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”** Our Lord Himself warned about this time in the midst of the week in Matthew 24:14-16,21: **“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”**

It is in this second half (42 months) of the tribulation that things start to gear up. The Anti-Christ is wounded to death and healed and because of this wonder the dragon (Satan) is worshipped and gives power unto the beast (Anti-Christ) who is also worshipped. It is at this point that it is given unto the Anti-Christ: **“to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.”** No wonder that our Lord warned about this time in the passage from Matthew 24 above.

Revelation 13:1-10: **“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as *the feet* of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the**

world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, *Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?* And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”

Shortly thereafter, a second beast comes up out of the earth who will turn out to be the false prophet in the dragon’s (Satan’s) attempt to duplicate the Holy Trinity with him as God the Father, the beast (Anti-Christ) as God the Son, and the second beast (false prophet) as the Holy Spirit. This second beast is described as follows:

Revelation 13:11-13: “**And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,**”

The second beast intensifies the “war with the saints,” “saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast,” (Anti-Christ) and also causes all “to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:.”

Revelation 13:14-18: “**And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number *is* Six hundred threescore *and* six.”**

Next, we see that the 144,000, who were sealed from the twelve tribes of Israel, were “redeemed from the earth.” and “redeemed from among men, *being* the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.”

Revelation 14:1-5: “**And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of**

many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being* the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

Concerning the Anti-Christ, it was earlier learned that at this time: **“power was given unto him to continue forty *and* two months.”** and **“it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.”** With the coming of the false prophet, we saw the war intensify with the image of the beast and the mark of the beast. We also saw earlier that the two witnesses are ascended to heaven and now the 144,000 are **“redeemed from the earth.”** and are in heaven. We don’t know, for sure, if the 144,000 were killed by the war or if they were caught up to heaven by God, but either way it would almost look like God is going to be without a witness on earth soon. We don’t have to wait long to see God using the angels for another important mission: to preach to the entire earth.

Revelation 14:6-13: **“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”**

By now the seven seals have been opened and the seven trumpets have been sounded. If you go to your Bible, and review them, you will notice that the judgments associated with the seals and trumpets, as awesome as they are, will not measure up to the escalation of God’s wrath represented by the last series of judgments called the seven vials. It appears that the vials are poured out during the last half (42 months) of the tribulation. No wonder the stern warning was given by our Lord in Matthew 24 to those who would still be alive at this time and are trying to resist the Anti-Christ with all his

devices. After the pouring out of the last of the seven vials, the earthly seat of the Anti-Christ and his associates of doom, the city of Babylon, is destroyed in one hour:

**Revelation 18:17-19: “For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What *city is* like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.”**

We learn in Revelation 16:12-16:

**“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, *which* go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed *is* he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”**

According to the verses above there are three unclean spirits that come out of the mouths of the unholy, counterfeit trinity in one last effort to defeat God in what is known popularly as the *battle of Armageddon*. Details of this famous future battle are given in two places in the book of Revelation:

**Revelation 14:14-20: “And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand *and* six hundred furlongs.”**

**Revelation 19:11-21: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies *which were***

in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all *men*, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

As we learn from the last few verses above, the beast (Anti-Christ) and the false prophet were cast alive into the lake of fire, and next, we learn what happens to the dragon (Satan).

Revelation 20:1-3: **“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”**

So let's review, the Anti-Christ and the false prophet are out of the way in the lake of fire, the dragon (Satan) is shut up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years, and the remnant (the kings of the earth and their armies) has been slain in the *battle of Armageddon*. The Lord Jesus Christ is now standing on earth, victorious, with the armies of heaven and anyone who has survived to this point on earth. Meanwhile, in heaven, there is a large number of souls who were killed in the tribulation about whom we read in Revelation 20:4: **“...and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”** We also read in Revelation 20:5,6: **“But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”** Based on this passage and other passages of Scripture, I believe that all the saved of all ages (other than we in the body of Christ) will have their part in this first resurrection to go into the long-awaited kingdom without end and in the first phase reign with Christ for a thousand years.