

The Tribulation
Matthew 24:9—28

According to Matthew 24:3—8 there are a number of things that will happen before the beginning of the Tribulation. There will be many antichrists and there will be wars, famines and earthquakes. These are the beginning of birth pangs leading us to believe these things will intensify as the Tribulation commences. All these things were to happen within Israel's prophetic program meaning that these things will not happen within this current Age of Grace.

Luke 21:12 makes it clear that the Disciples will be persecuted and even put to death before many of these things happen. Their fellow countrymen will hate them because they will not accept their preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom. Verses 16—18 tell us that in spite of death, they will gain their lives giving them the assurance of entrance into the Kingdom.

One thing Jesus never mentions is the Rapture of the Church. I believe Jesus had no knowledge that there would be a Rapture. In fact, He didn't even know when the Second Coming would be (Mark 13:32) This is because His humanity was veiled from His deity making Jesus fully dependant upon the Father (John 5:19, 30; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10). Those who don't rightly divide Scripture are left to assume that the Rapture is the same event as the Second Coming. They understand the first resurrection will be all believers who will reign with Christ for 1,000 years (Luke 14:14; Revelation 20:5). The second resurrection is for unbelievers and will happen at the end of the Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:11—14). They fail to understand that there is an unprophesied resurrection that will involve the Church, the Body of Christ. This was a mystery resurrection revealed only through the Apostle Paul.

Tribulational Events

Most of what we learn about the Tribulation is found in Daniel, Revelation and the Gospels although there are many references to the Tribulation throughout the Old Testament. Daniel gives us a general timeline of events while Revelation fills in much detail. These details are often very specific giving precise information and exact days. Other events are not so clear and must be inferred from various passages of Scripture. This is why there is a consensus on some details and much disagreement on others.

There are many who understand Revelation to be written as an allegory. The events happening during the Tribulation are so unbelievable that it is easy to understand why people would interpret Revelation as being a picture that illustrates truths for the church instead of depicting actual events of Israel's future. However, those who allegorize Revelation can make it say anything they want it to say. When allegorization is used, such as when Paul used Hagar and Sarah to compare Law and grace, Scripture will define what is meant so that man can't come up with their own interpretation (Galatians 4:24).

Purpose

The Tribulation will accomplish several things that are all related to God's end-time prophetic events. The first relates to Israel, God's chosen people. After the Rapture, God will once again deal with Israel to complete all the promises He gave her. However, Israel will be in need of cleansing and purification to make her an acceptable bride made ready by righteous acts (Revelation 19:7). Note that the Church, the Body of Christ is not the bride even though Paul compares the Church as a bride. In this case Christ sanctified the Church whereas the Jewish Bride needed to make herself ready (Ephesians 5:25—27).

Even though there are many who can claim to be of Israel nationally, true Israel is made up of those who are nationally related to Jacob and spiritually related to Messiah (Romans 9:6; 2:28—29). The Tribulation will act as a refining furnace, burning off the dross and leaving the pure silver. Israel will be going through the furnace of the Tribulation and those who are not true Jews will be cut off from Israel and experience eternal damnation (Ezekiel 22:18—22; Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:2—3). God will chasten Israel, punishing her for turning away from Him (Jeremiah 30:11; Ezekiel 20:33—38).

The Tribulation will also be a time of God pouring out His wrath on the Gentiles for how they treated Israel. Jeremiah 30:7—11 says God will completely destroy those nations who have taken Israel captive (see also Jeremiah 46:28).

Not only will the Tribulation be a time of God's wrath for those who have turned against Him, but it will also be a time of preparing the world for the Millennial Kingdom when the righteous government of heaven will replace the unholy government of man. The world will move from the day of man to the day of the Lord. Mankind was given the task of subduing the earth (Genesis 1:28) and after the flood was given the task of governing each other (Genesis 9:4—5). Man will no longer be in charge when God takes over rulership of the world as Christ takes the throne in the temple at Jerusalem.

Duration and timing

Daniel 9 lays out the timeline of Israel's future (at least it was all future when Daniel wrote this passage). The 70 sevens (as Scripture literally says) refers to 70 weeks of years, 490 years in total. This last week of 7 years (week 70) has yet to be accomplished and is outlined in verses 26b—27.

Revelation confirms this seven-year duration. Revelation 12:6 says that a remnant of Israel will escape Jerusalem when they see the Abomination of Desolation at the mid-point of the Tribulation. They will be taken care of by God for 1,260 days or 3.5 years (a year is 360 days). This same period of time is called a time (one year), times (two years) and half a time (half a year) in verse 14 for a total of 3.5 years. This same period of time is referred to as 42 months in Revelation 13:5, the time the antichrist rises in power to blaspheme God until his demise. Since all these things occur during the last half of the Tribulation, the full period of Tribulation will last for seven years.

According to Daniel's prophetic 490 years the Tribulation was scheduled to begin shortly after the cutting off of Messiah (Daniel 9:26). However, Israel seemingly was given an additional year to repent and accept the offer of the Kingdom (Luke 13:6—9). This one-year extension came to an end with the stoning of Stephen, Israel's answer to the Holy Spirit's call for them to accept the invitation to enter the Kingdom. This event marked Israel's last chance to accept this offer after rejecting the Father's plea through John the Baptist and Jesus' plea. This final rejection was not forgiven (Matthew 12:31). Seeing Jesus standing, as Stephen was looking into heaven (Acts 7:56), indicated that the Tribulation was about to begin (Psalm 110:1; 7:6).

The Tribulation has not happen yet because instead of God pouring out His wrath on mankind, He poured out His grace by choosing Paul to announce the Gospel of the Grace of God. Once the Church, the Body of Christ is Raptured, God will once again deal with Israel according to prophecy including the beginning of the Tribulation and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom.

According to Daniel 9:27 the antichrist will make a firm covenant with the many for one week. This is usually understood to mean that the signing of a seven-year peace treaty with Israel and the surrounding nations will mark the beginning of the Tribulation. In the middle of the three-and-one-half years, the antichrist breaks the treaty and enters their temple to desecrate it. This would mark the middle of the Tribulation.

It must be understood that the breaking of the covenant may not indicate the exact middle of the seven-year Tribulation. The word used in Daniel 9:27 means in the midst of the week making the break somewhere midway in the Tribulation. The Abomination of Desolation is tied to an event 1,290 days later (Daniel 12:11). This event is often thought to be the actual Second Coming but there is much discussion regarding what is actually being referenced.

Likewise, the beginning of the Tribulation does not need to be precisely at the moment the covenant is put into effect. It certainly is toward the beginning of the Tribulation but the wording of Daniel 9:27 leaves it somewhat vague.

For previous notes and additional mid-Acts materials please visit www.MidActsTruths.com