

The Great Tribulation

The Tribulation

The Tribulation is a seven-year period (detailed in Rev 6-19) between the rapture of the church (1 Thess 4:13-18) and the millennial kingdom (Rev 20:1-8). This is a pretribulation/premillennial understanding of the end times. This period of time is designated by various titles in Scripture as noted below. During this time, God's judgment will be poured out on unbelieving and rebellious humanity in the fullest measure. This judgment period also will be used to turn the Jewish people back to God and to see the gospel extend to all the nations (Rev 7:9ff). Indeed it will be a time of retribution, redemption, and restoration.

A. Day of the Lord (OT)

The Prophets in the Old Testament looked forward to a period of time when the Sovereign Lord would judge the world and establish an everlasting kingdom. This would be a terrible time of death and destruction which would destroy the power of sin and establish Him over all others as Lord. This period is characterized by:

1. A time of great destruction. (Is. 13:6; 15-17; Jer. 46:3-6, 10; Ezek. 7:5-7; Joel 1:15)
2. A time of reckoning. (Is. 2:12; 34:8; Obad. 15)
3. Destruction of idolatry. (Is. 12:18; Ezek. 30:13-14)
4. Physical manifestation of destruction. (Is. 2:18-20; 13:6-9; 22:1-25; 34:1-17; Jer. 46:1-25; Ezek. 7; 30:1-19; Joel 1:19; 2:1-11; 2:31; 3:9-16; Amos 5:18-20; 8:8-9)
5. Inescapable judgment. (Jer. 46:6-12; Ezek. 13:5; Joel 2:3-11; Amos 9:5-9)
6. A remnant turning to God. (Joel 2:32; Obad. 17-21)
7. God defeating the nations. (Zech. 14:3-7; 14:12-15)

B. Daniel's 70th Week

In the book of Daniel, the prophecy of the future time is divided into 7-year periods called weeks. The 70th week corresponds to the tribulation period. Daniel gives a detailed account of the events that will take place during this period concerning Israel. (Dan. 7-12) The 70th week is discussed specifically in Daniel 9:24-27.

C. The Teaching of Jesus

Jesus predicted the coming of the Tribulation by telling of the events that would transpire before the return of the Son of Man. This took place on the Mount of Olives just before His betrayal and crucifixion. It is often called the "Olivet Discourse." Jesus used the soon destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in A.D. 70

as a foreshadowing of the end time Tribulation. In His teaching he warned the people about various events that would occur leading up to his 2nd Coming in power and glory.

1. Jesus warned against deception and danger, false christs, and false prophets (Matt. 24:4-14; Mk. 13:5-13; Lk. 21:8-19)
2. Jesus warned concerning the abomination of desolation. (Matt. 24:15-25; Mk. 13:14-23; Lk. 14:10-24; cf. Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11)

D. Day of the Lord (NT)

The New Testament picks up with the Old Testament description of the Day of the Lord and seems to broaden it to describe the whole complex of events leading up to and including Christ's return.

1. It is a day of judgment. (1 Thess. 5; 2 Thess. 2; Rev. 6:17; 16:14; also cf. 1 Cor. 3:13; 5:5; 2 Pet. 2:9; 3:10, 12)
2. It is a time when Satan will attempt to usurp authority from God. (2 Thess. 2:2-12)

E. Events Which Occur During the Tribulation.

1. The Judgments of the seven seals. (Rev. 6)
2. God seals 144,000 Jews, and many believers are martyred. (Rev. 7)
3. The judgment of the seven trumpets. (Rev. 8-11)
4. The Gentiles occupy the Temple. (Rev. 11:1-2)
5. The Anti-Christ rises to power. (Rev. 13)
6. The judgment of the seven bowls. (Rev. 15-16)
7. Babylon is destroyed. (Rev. 17-18)
 - a) Religious Babylon (ch. 17)
 - b) Economic/political Babylon (ch. 18)

The Tribulation: A Recap

A. Definition

This is a period of seven years when God's judgment on unbelieving man will be intense and fulfilled. It will be specifically related to Israel but will include all the earth. It is also known as "Daniel's seventieth week" (Dan. 9:27) and the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7) and the "Day of the Lord."

B. Parenthesis – “Day of the Lord”

The “Day of the Lord” is a future period of time when the Sovereign Lord will judge Israel and the nations of the earth for their pride and establish His kingdom on the earth. The “day of the Lord” is a time when God will totally judge and destroy all the nations who have resisted him and who had been against Israel (God will honor the cause of Israel). Man’s pride will be judged and idolatry will be done away with. God alone will be the Lord. It is characterized as a time of judgment, death, and destruction. It will be a fearful time—worse than any other period of previous or subsequent history. Despite the ominous nature of the period, it will also be a time of worshipping God—God’s Spirit will be poured out and all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. (Is. 2:12-21; 13:1-22; 22:1-25; 34:1-17; Jer. 46:1-12; Ezek. 7:1-27; 13:5; 30:1-19; Joel 1:15; 2:1-11, 28-32; 3:9-17; Amos 5:18-20; 8:8-9; 9:5-6; 9:11-15; Obad. 15-21; Zeph. 1:7-8; 2:1-3; 3:8; Zech. 14:1-21). Thus it is a time of retribution, redemption, and restoration (cf. Rev. 20-22)

C. Scriptures relating to the Period in General

Jer. 30:4-7; Dan. 9:24-27; 12:1; Zech. 13:8-9; Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; Rev. 6-19

D. Specific Events of the Period

1. The period will begin with a covenant being made between Antichrist and Israel. The covenant will reestablish sacrifice in Israel (Dan. 9:27).
2. The covenant will be broken and Antichrist will set himself up to be worshipped as God. This will take place at the midpoint of the seven year period (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15ff; 2 Thess. 2:3-4; Rev. 13:14-15).

E. The Judgments of the Period

1. The Seal judgments (Rev. 6:1-8:5)
2. The Trumpet judgments (Rev. 8:6-11:19)
3. The Bowl judgments (Rev. 16:1-21)

F. The Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24-25)

The Olivet discourse is the fifth and last great discourse in Matthew (chs. 24-25), so named because of the location of its delivery on the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem. It is given its most extensive form in Matthew (cf. also Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-36). Three questions are raised by the disciples: 1) When is the destruction of Jerusalem prophesied by Jesus to take place? 2) What will be the sign of Christ’s coming? 3) What signs will foreshadow the “end of the world?” The first question is given less attention than the last two. The coming destruction of Jerusalem, which was accomplished by Titus in A.D. 70, is pictured along with the events of the end of the age in 24:5-28. However, even this is clearly viewed by Jesus as a

foreshadowing of the fateful days of the Great Tribulation period. The greater portion of the material relates to the awesomeness of those days.

The Prediction of the King

Matthew 24

I. The Destruction of the Temple in the Future 24:1-2

II. The Question of the Disciples Concerning the Future 24:3

III. The Explanation of Jesus Concerning the Future 24:4-31

(The end time is typified in the near destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70)

(The end time realized in the final great tribulation of the world)

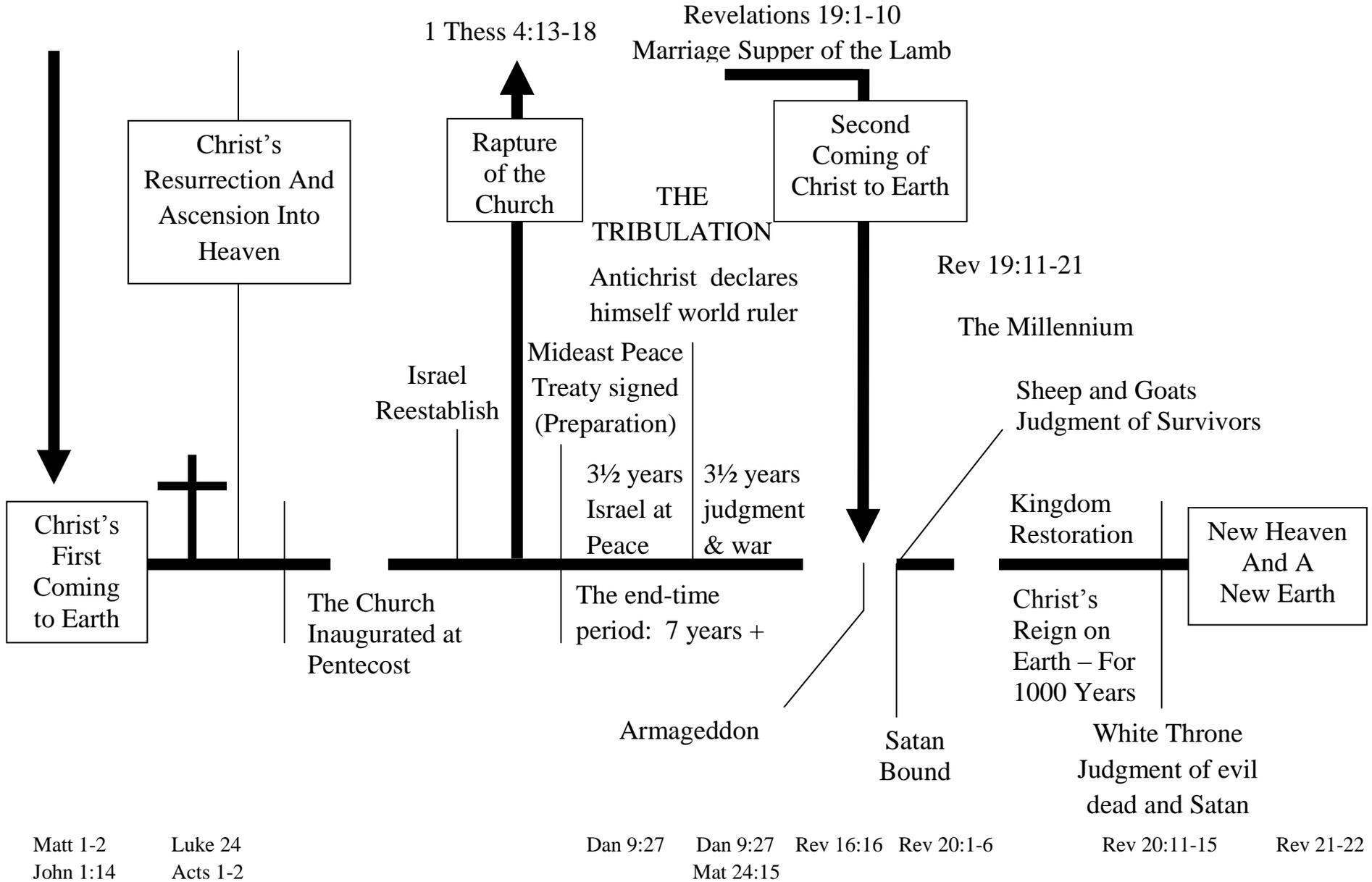
1) The first half of the seven year tribulation 24:4-8

2) The midpoint of the seven year tribulation 24:15

3) The second half of the seven year tribulation 24:9-28

4) The consummation of the seven year tribulation 24:29-31

Order of Events of Bible Prophecy According to the Pretribulational/Premillennial Understanding



Matthew 24:15: An Explanation

The terminology “abomination of desolation” is found in Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11. This text is one of the clearest examples in Scripture of a prophecy with multiple fulfillments. 1) The first reference is to Antiochus Epiphanes who in 167 B.C. halted the sacrifices in the temple, defiled the temple by raising up an idol, a pagan altar to Zeus, and sacrificing a pig on the altar in the temple. 2) Jesus, in this discourse, seems to have in view, at least typically, the near destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A. D. 70 by the Roman general Titus. That Christians of that time so understood this prediction is evidenced by the fact that many followed the command of vv. 16-18 and fled to the wilderness during the Roman invasion and siege. 3) Daniel, Jesus, Paul (cf. 2 Thess 2:2-4) and John (cf. Rev 13:14-15), see a future eschatological and ultimate fulfillment in the actions of the Antichrist during the Tribulation (Rev 6-19), also identified as Daniel’s 70th week (Dan 9:24-27). In Daniel 9:27 it becomes apparent that a reenactment of Antiochus’ treacherous desecration will occur when the “prince who is to come” make a seven-year covenant with Israel. The “prince” who is the Antichrist (Paul’s “man of sin” and John’s “sea beast” in Rev. 13:1-10) breaks his covenant after 3 ½ years. There follows the desecration of the temple, great persecution of Israel, and the more severe judgments of the Tribulation. Matthew 24 then is a further description of Daniel’s 70th week, and in a number of instances parallels the book of Revelation.

The Tribulation in Revelation (Chapters 6-19)

These chapters record the horrifying events of what is called “The Great Tribulation.” Through this seven-year period of time is one of retribution upon a world that has rejected the Lordship of God, it is also a time of redemption for the Jewish people and the nations (Rev. 7) and cosmically (Rev. 20-22). The events of the tribulation center or focus primarily upon three series of seven judgments:

The Seals	6:1-17
The Trumpets	8:1-9:21
The Bowls	16:1-17

These series of judgments are best interpreted in their relationship to one another as partially concurrent. This is sometimes called the telescopic view. There is some overlap at the end of the judgments. This approach understands the seventh seal to introduce and contain the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet to introduce and contain the seven bowls. The seven trumpet, therefore, are the seventh seal, and the seven bowls are the seventh trumpet. This would indicate both an increase in intensity and a greater rapidity of the judgments as the end of the period approaches. The diagram below is helpful in understanding this arrangement.

