

Session 3: Negative Trends in the End-Times: The Great Tribulation

I. (REVIEW) THE DAY OF THE LORD: THE 2 EXTREMES RELATED TO JESUS' RETURN

¹¹ *For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:11)*

⁵ *I will send you Elijah...before...the great and dreadful day of the LORD. (Mal. 4:5)*

- A. The great Day of the Lord refers to the unusual events (positive and negative) that suddenly begin to escalate in the final 3½ years before Jesus returns. It is “His Day” because it is a unique time frame in which Jesus acts in the earthly arena in great power for His people and against His enemies. He openly shows Himself as the warrior King.
- B. The 2-fold nature of the Lord’s day consists of great blessing and terrible judgments.
 - 1. *It will be a great Day* to those who call on Jesus’ name because they will experience the greatest outpouring of the Spirit in history leading to Jesus’ Coming (Joel 2:28-32).
 - 2. *It will be a very terrible Day* to the rebellious who will experience the most severe outpouring of God’s judgments ever seen (Rev. 6-20).
- C. The prophets asked, “Who can endure the Day of the Lord events?” In other words, who can experience God’s favor, deliverance and power in this unique time frame?

II. THE 2-DIMENSIONAL DAY OF THE LORD (NARROW AND BROAD)

- A. The Day of the Lord in Scripture refers both to a 24-hour day in which Jesus returns to Jerusalem (the Second Coming) and to a series of events covering an extended time beginning at the Tribulation and continuing until the end of Jesus’ Millennial reign.
- B. *The Narrow Day of the Lord* refers to the 24-hour day in which Jesus returns to earth.
- C. *The Broad Day of the Lord* begins at the Great Tribulation and extends through the Millennial Kingdom including its judgment on Satan’s final revolt followed by the cleansing of the heavens and earth with fervent heat (Isa. 65:17-19; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 20:7-9; 21:1).
- D. In the Jewish tradition a day started in the evening (Gen. 1:5). Thus, a day starts in darkness (followed by 6-8 hours of darkness) before the light of dawn. In a similar way, the Day of the Lord has 3½ years of darkness before the “Millennial Day” breaks forth at Jesus’ Coming.
- E. The way a hurricane hits the coastland illustrates aspects of the Day of the Lord. The wind blows on the land in an ever increasing way until the eye of the storm (Second Coming) reaches land.

III. THE PROPHETIC 7-YEAR PERIOD BEFORE JESUS' SECOND COMING

- A. Daniel prophesied of a prophetic 7-year period that would lead to Jesus' Coming (Dan. 9:27). This 7-year period will have two distinct time frames that are each composed of 3½ years.
- ²⁷ *Then he (Antichrist) shall confirm a covenant (peace treaty) with many for one week (final 7 years before Jesus' return); but in the middle of the week (after the 3½ years mark) he (Antichrist) shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering (in the Jerusalem Temple). And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate (the Antichrist's activity during the Great Tribulation)... (Dan. 9:27)*
- B. Daniel prophesied that the Antichrist will confirm a covenant (peace treaty) with many (Jewish individuals and Gentile nations) for "one week." A "week" in Hebrew understanding was a period of 7 days or 7 years (Gen 29:27-28). A week of 7 years was a common term in Daniel's day. The vast majority of commentators agree that this "week" is a week of years (7 years).
- C. No one knows when this last prophetic 7-year period begins. However, we do know how it starts. The Antichrist makes a covenant with Israel and various Middle East nations (Dan. 9:27).
- D. The Antichrist will make a peace treaty with promises that are to last for one week (7 year period). In this covenant with the Antichrist, Israel will receive him as their Messiah. In the middle of the week (after 3½ years), the Antichrist will betray his covenant with Israel by stopping their temple activities and replacing them with his own (Dan. 9:27b, c).
- E. The Antichrist will put an image (statue) of himself in the Jerusalem Temple and will demand to be worshipped as God from there (2 Thes. 2:4; Rev 13:8–17). This is referred to as the Abomination of Desolation (Dan. 8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Matt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14). It signals the beginning of the Great Tribulation.
- ¹⁵ *When you see the 'Abomination of Desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand)... (Mt. 24:15)*
- ³ *The man of sin (Antichrist)...4 exalts himself above all that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. (2 Thes. 2:3-4)*
- ⁸ *All who dwell on the earth will worship him (Antichrist)... (Rev. 13:8)*
- F. The Abomination of Desolation signals the beginning of the Great Tribulation.
- G. Some consider the Tribulation to be the entire 7 years before Jesus returns with the last 3½ years of it being referred to as the Great Tribulation (since it is more intense than the first 3½ years).

- H. The first 3½ years will be a time of worldwide religious tolerance referred to as a time of “false peace and safety.” It will only be a time of peace and safety for unbelievers. This false peace will begin with the Antichrist’s peace treaty (which initiates the prophetic final 7 year period). It will be fueled by a false religious system known as Harlot Babylon (Rev. 17:5). There will be great intolerance towards true Christianity with widespread martyrdom of Christians (Rev. 17:6). This will not be a time of peace and safety for believers (Mt. 24:9-14).

² *For you yourselves know perfectly that the Day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains (Great Tribulation) upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. (1 Thes. 5:2-3)*

⁹ *They will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. (Mt. 24:9)*

- I. There will be significant tribulation against the saints in this time yet it will precede the Great Tribulation that comes to the whole earth in the final 3½ years of natural history (Mt. 24:21).

IV. THE GREAT TRIBULATION

- A. The Great Tribulation will be the most difficult time in history for Israel, the Church, and all nations (Mt. 24:21; Jer. 30:7; Ezek. 5:9; Rev. 7:14). It will be the final 3½ year period of this age, when the Antichrist rules a worldwide system including government, finances and religion.

¹ *At that time...there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was... 7 He (angel)...swore...that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time (3½ years); when the power of the holy people (Israel) has been completely shattered... (Dan. 12:1, 7)*

²¹ *Then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 Unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved (physically preserved); for the elect's sakes those days will be shortened. (Mt. 24:21-22)*

²³ *For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people...25There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring... (Lk. 21:23-25)*

1. There will be tribulation against the saints from the Antichrist because they refuse to worship him (Rev. 12:12; 13:4, 8). The nations of the earth will suffer military invasions by the Antichrist’s worldwide evil empire (Rev. 13).
 2. There will be tribulation against the Antichrist’s worldwide empire from God who releases the judgments recorded in the Book of Revelation (7 seals, 7 trumpets, 7 bowls).
- B. Scripture refers to this 3½ years in 8 different ways: **42 months** (Rev. 11:2; 13:5), **1260 days** (Rev. 11:3; 12:6), **time, times and half a time** (Rev. 12:14; Dan. 7:25; 12:7), **the Great Tribulation** (Mt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14), **Jacob's Trouble** (Jer. 30:7), **a time of trouble** (Dan. 12:1), **the middle of the Week** (Dan. 9:27), **perilous times** (2 Tim. 3:1).

- C. John wrote of the Great Tribulation.
¹³ Who are these...and where did they come from?" ¹⁴ So he (angel) said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the Great Tribulation, and washed their robes..." (Rev. 7:13-14)
- D. Jeremiah prophesied of the Tribulation as labor pains before the birth of the Millennial Kingdom.
⁵ We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear... ⁶ I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? ⁷ Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. (Jer. 30:5-7)
- E. Ezekiel prophesied of events having a dual fulfillment (greatest fulfillment in the Tribulation).
⁹ I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations. (Ezek. 5:9)
- F. Joel prophesied of events having a dual fulfillment (greatest fulfillment in the Tribulation).
² A day of darkness and gloominess...a people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations (until the end of Jesus' Millennial reign; Rev. 20:7-9). (Joel 2:2)
- G. Moses wrote of the Great Tribulation.
²⁷ The LORD will scatter you among the peoples...²⁹ From there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him...³⁰ When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD ³¹...He will not...forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them. (Deut. 4:27-31)
- H. **The principle of God's love in judgment:** God uses the least severe means to reach the greatest number of people at the deepest level of love without violating anyone's free will in training the future rulers of the earth. The Goshen principle will be operative in this hour (Ex. 8:22-23). God's judgments remove all that hinders love by removing options (temptations) which function as the props we trust in and the temptations we refuse to resist.

V. THE GREAT TRIBULATION: 4 DIFFERENT SOURCES OF PRESSURE

- A. The fullness of God's wrath (Rev. 15:7) includes 21 specific events against those who rebel as seen in the 7 seals (Rev. 6; 7) the 7 trumpets (Rev. 8:9) and the 7 bowls (Rev. 16).
¹⁰ The wrath of God which is poured out full strength... (Rev. 14:10)
- B. The fullness of Satan's rage in persecuting the saints through the Antichrist's reign of terror (Rev. 12:12; Dan. 7:21, 25; Rev. 13).
¹² Woe to the inhabitants of the earth...! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time. (Rev. 12:12)

- C. The fullness of man's sin will be seen in the actions of evil people against one another (Rev. 9:21; 14:18; 17:5; 18:5; Dan. 8:23; 12:10).

²¹ *They did not repent of their murders...sorceries...sexual immorality or thefts. (Rev. 9:21)*

1. **Murder**: as the primary sin on earth (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:13-14; 9:21; 13:7, 10; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 9:2; 2 Tim. 3:3 (brutal); Dan. 7:21, 25; 8:24; 11:33-35; 12:7, 10; Mk. 13:12-13)
2. **Sorceries**: occult and demon worship will fill the earth (Rev. 13:3-4, 8, 12-15; 14:11; 16:13-14; 18:23; Matt. 24:5, 11, 12, 24; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Thes. 2:3-4)
3. **Immorality**: demon energized perversion (Rev. 9:20-21; 16:13; 17:2; 18:3; 19:2)
4. **Theft**: legislation and persecution motivated by theft (i.e., the Nazi's anti-Semitism)

- D. The convulsions in nature (groan of creation) will be seen in fullness as the land is affected by man's sin (earthquakes, upheavals in the sea, atmosphere, agriculture, sky, etc.).

²¹ *Creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans... (Rom. 8:21-22)*

⁶ *"I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; 7 and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations (Jesus) ..." says the LORD of hosts. (Hag. 2:6-7)*

VI. AN UNPRECEDENTED DEATH TOLL: 2 SEVERE WAVES OF DEATH

- A. In the Great Tribulation, there will be two severe waves of death. The first wave will claim one fourth, of earth's population. The second wave will kill an additional one third of the earth. This will total 50% of the population (or 4 billion based on a possible population of 8 billion people).

⁸ *Behold, a pale horse. The name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. Power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth. (Rev. 6:8)*

¹⁵ *The four angels...were released to kill one-third of mankind. (Rev. 9:15)*

- B. Isaiah prophesied of only a small percent of the unbelievers surviving the Great Tribulation. The saints will be raptured at the end of it.

⁶ *Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left. (Isa. 24:6)*

⁹ *Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger...and He will destroy its sinners from it. 10 For the stars of heaven...will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine. 11 I will punish the world for its evil...I will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. 12 I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, a man more than the golden wedge of Ophir. 13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place (Isa. 13:9-13)*

⁸ *Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, I will destroy it from the face of the earth...10 All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword... (Amos 9:8-10)*

VII. GOD'S 7-FOLD PURPOSE IN ALLOWING THE GREAT TRIBULATION

- A. God's purpose is to glorify Jesus by releasing His power, exposing evil, and removing all that hinders love, thus creating the optimum setting for the following to take place.
- B. First, God will use the Great Tribulation to purify His people causing the Church to be as a Bride prepared to walk in God's glory without any compromise. God's judgments will remove all that hinders love by removing the props we trust in and the temptations we refuse to resist.
- ²⁷ *That He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish (no compromise). (Eph. 5:27)*
- ⁷ *For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. 8 To her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright... (Rev. 19:7-8)*
- ³⁵ *And some of those of understanding shall fall (be martyred), to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end... (Dan 11:35)*
- ¹⁰ *Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. (Dan 12:10)*
- C. Second, God will use the Tribulation to cause unbelievers to respond to His grace as eternity bears down on their heart. He will usher in a great Ingathering of souls and Israel's salvation.
- ⁹ *Behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes...14 He said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the Great Tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:9-14)*
- ⁶ *"I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; 7 and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations (Jesus)..." says the LORD of hosts. (Hag. 2:6-7)*
- D. Third, God will use the Tribulation to vindicate the saints as He avenges their death.
- ² *For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot...and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her. (Rev. 19:2)*
- ⁶ *It is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, 7 and to give you...rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven... (2 Thes. 1:6-7)*
- E. Fourth, God will use it to demonstrate His power to protect His people as He did in the days of Moses in what I refer to as the "Goshen Principle" (Ex. 8:22-23; 9:4-6, 26; 10:23; 11:7).
- ²² *I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there.....23 I will make a difference between My people and your people. (Ex. 8:22-23)*
- ¹⁷ *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." (Rom. 9:17)*

F. Fifth, God will use the Tribulation to expose false believers within the Church.

³ *That Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin (Antichrist) is revealed...9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 For this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who...had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thes. 2:3-12)*

¹ *The Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons... (1 Tim. 4:1-2)*

G. Sixth, God will use it to allow evil to be fully manifest and then to express His justice and righteousness in punishing people for choosing sin.

²¹ *The LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain. (Isa. 26:21)*

¹ *Behold, the LORD makes the earth empty and makes it waste, distorts its surface and scatters abroad its inhabitants...4 The earth mourns and fades away, the world languishes and fades away...5 The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws...broken the everlasting covenant. 6 Therefore the curse has devoured the earth...Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left. (Isa. 24:1-6)*

H. Seventh, God will use it to purge and cleanse the earth from sin before the Millennial Kingdom.

¹ *In that day a fountain shall be opened for...for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. 2 It shall be in that day...I will cut off the names of the idols from the land... I will cause the (false) prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land. (Zech. 13:1-2)*

¹ *Behold, the LORD makes the earth empty and makes it waste, distorts its surface and scatters abroad its inhabitants...3 The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered, for the LORD has spoken this word. 4 The earth mourns and fades away, the world languishes and fades away...5 The earth is defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws...broken the everlasting covenant. 6 Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left. (Isa. 24:1-6)*

VIII. THE THREE NUMBERED JUDGMENT SERIES (7 SEALS, 7 TRUMPETS, 7 BOWLS)

- A. The Great Tribulation consists of God's judgment seen in the 7 seals, 7 trumpets, and the 7 bowls of wrath as described in Rev. 6-19. These judgments become more severe as they unfold i.e., the 7 seals events are surpassed in severity by the 7 trumpets; then again by the 7 bowls of wrath (one-fourth of the human race dies in the seals then one-third die in the trumpets). There will be different responses to God's judgments. Many respond in fear (6:15-17) leading them to curse God (16:21) without repenting (9:20-21) as others glorify God for His power and salvation (Rev. 7:9; 11:13; 14:6).
- B. The 3 judgment series are focused on the Antichrist's worldwide empire as He purges the earth. They are **literal** (actual events not to be explained away symbolically or historically), **future** (their greatest fulfillment is future), **progressive** (they increase in intensity) and **numbered** (released in a sequential order as they follow one after the other in sequence that we might know their order as they unfold on earth).

IX. THE KEY NEGATIVE JUDGMENT EVENTS AGAINST THE EVIL PEOPLE

- A. **THE SEVEN SEALS** (Rev. 6:1-17; 8:1)
1. **First Seal** (White Horse): Antichrist's political aggression (Rev. 6:1-2)
 2. **Second Seal** (Red Horse): bloodshed and World War (Rev. 6:3-4)
 3. **Third Seal** (Black Horse): famine and economic crisis (Rev. 6:5-6)
 4. **Fourth Seal** (Pale Horse): disease and death to 1/4 of the earth (Rev. 6:7-8)
 5. **Fifth Seal** (Prayer Movement): spiritual atmosphere – releasing God's judgment (Rev. 6:9-11)
 6. **Sixth Seal** (Cosmic Disturbances): natural atmosphere – cosmic crisis (Rev. 6:12-17)
 7. **Seventh Seal** (Silence in Heaven): Heaven's atmosphere – release of 7 Trumpets (Rev. 8-9).
- B. **THE SEVEN TRUMPETS** (Rev. 8:2-9:21; 11:14-19)
1. **First Trumpet** (Food Supply): Burning 1/3 of the earth's vegetation (Rev. 8:7)
 2. **Second Trumpet** (Food Supply): Destroying 1/3 of the earth's seas (Rev. 8:8-9)
 3. **Third Trumpet** (Water Supply): Poisoning 1/3 of the earth's fresh water (Rev. 8:10-11)
 4. **Fourth Trumpet** (Light, Energy): Darkening 1/3 of the earth's light (Rev. 8:12-13)
 5. **Fifth Trumpet** (Torment): Release of demonic locusts plague (Rev. 9:1-12)
 6. **Sixth Trumpet** (Death): Release demons that kill 1/3 of the earth's population (Rev. 9:13-21)
 7. **Seventh Trumpet** (Defeat): begins Jesus' Second Coming procession (Rev. 11:15-19)
- C. **THE SEVEN BOWLS** (Rev. 15-16) i.e., plagues in Egypt (Exod. 7-12)
1. **First Bowl** (Sores): painful sores on worshipers of the Antichrist (Rev. 16:1-2)
 2. **Second Bowl** (Food Supply): sea turns to blood and kills all in the sea (Rev. 16:3)
 3. **Third Bowl** (Water Supply): all the fresh water turns to blood (Rev. 16:4-7)
 4. **Fourth Bowl** (Torment): scorching heat and fire from the sun (Rev. 16:8-9)
 5. **Fifth Bowl** (Destruction): darkness on the Antichrist's global empire (Rev. 16:10-11)
 6. **Sixth Bowl** (Global Guilt): demons lure the nations to Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-16)
 7. **Seventh Bowl** (Annihilation): worst earthquake, 100 pound hail stones (Rev. 16:17-21).