

**Loris First Baptist Church**  
***“52 Vital Doctrines of The Bible”***

**Doctrine #45 – The Great Tribulation**

Note: Most information based on pages 320-326 of the book “Major Bible Themes” by Lewis Sperry Chaffer.

**The Great Tribulation in Contrast with General Tribulation**

1. Much confusion has arisen in the doctrine of the Great Tribulation because of failure to distinguish between the general trials and sufferings of the people of God and the specific period of the Great Tribulation described in the Old and New Testaments.
2. The concept of tribulation implies a time of pressure, affliction, anguish of heart, and trouble in general.
  - a. A situation of tribulation is, accordingly, a common experience of the human race resulting from its sin and rebellion against God and from the conflict between God and Satan in the world.

**Job 5:7** *“MAN IS BORN INTO TROUBLE, as the sparks fly upward.”*

**John 16:33** *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”*

- b. The trials of Job in the Old Testament and the problems of Paul with his thorn in the flesh in the New Testament are symptomatic of the human race constantly in trouble and bearing many types of affliction.
    - c. These have characterized the human race since Adam and will continue to some extent until human history has run its course, although greatly alleviated in the time of the millennial kingdom.
3. In contrast with these general intimations of trial and trouble as they afflict the race, Scripture speaks of a special time of trouble at the end of the age, specifically a time of great tribulation which will continue for forty-two months leading up to the second coming of Christ.

**The Old Testament Doctrine of the Great Tribulation**

1. As early as Deuteronomy 4:29-30 Israel was warned to turn to the Lord when she was in her time of tribulation in the latter days.

**Deuteronomy 4:29-30** *“But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find Him if you look for Him with all your heart and with all your soul. WHEN YOU ARE IN DISTRESS and all these things have happened to you, then IN LATTER DAYS you will return to the Lord your God and obey Him.”*

2. This particular time is brought into focus by the prophet Jeremiah.

**Jeremiah 30:1-10** *“This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you. The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘WHEN I WILL BRING MY PEOPLE ISRAEL AND JUDAH BACK FROM CAPTIVITY AND RESTORE THEM TO THE LAND I GAVE THEIR FOREFATHERS TO POSSESS,’ says the LORD.” These are the words the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah: ‘This is what the Lord says: ‘CRIES OF FEAR ARE HEARD—TERROR, NOT PEACE. Ask and see: Can a man bear children? Then why do I see every strong man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor, every face turned deathly pale? HOW AWFUL THAT DAY WILL BE! None will be like it. IT WILL BE A TIME OF JACOB’S TROUBLE, but he will be saved out of it. ‘In that day,’ declares the Lord Almighty, ‘I will break the yoke off their necks and will tear off their bonds; no longer will foreigners enslave them. Instead, they will serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. ‘So do not fear, O Jacob my servant; do not be dismayed, O Israel,’ declares the LORD. ‘I will surely save you out of a distant place, your descendants from the land of their exile. Jacob will again have peace and security, and no one will make him afraid.”*

- a. In Jeremiah 30:3, he predicts that this time of trouble will be preceded by a partial return of the children of Israel to their land.
- b. Immediately following, in verses 4-7, is described the period of trouble which will come upon them after they have returned to the land. Israel will be in travail as a woman giving birth to a child.
- c. The time of tribulation is described specifically in Jeremiah 30:7: *“Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.”*
- d. Israel is given the promise that, though she will endure this great time of trouble, God will eventually break her yoke of bondage and she will no longer serve the Gentiles.
- e. Instead, according to verse 9, *“they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.”*
  - 1) This prophesies the millennial kingdom, when David will be resurrected and with Christ reign over the house of Israel.
  - 2) Accordingly, Israel is given reassurance not to be dismayed; it is God’s purpose that eventually *“Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid”* (v. 10).

3. The time of Jacob’s trouble, or the Great Tribulation, is in view in Daniel 9:27 after the covenant is broken between the Antichrist and Israel.

**Daniel 9:27** *“He (i.e. “the Antichrist”) will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ HE WILL PUT AN END TO SACRIFICE AND OFFERINGS. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”*

- a. Here it is revealed specifically that Israel, after the covenant has been broken, will be persecuted for the remaining half of the seven-year period, or three and one-half years (42 months).

- 1) One of the first things the Antichrist stops is Israel's practice of making sacrifices and offerings to their God at the temple that is rebuilt in Israel during the first half of the covenant with him.

**Daniel 12:11-12** *"From the time that THE DAILY SACRIFICE IS ABOLISHED and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days."*

- 2) One thousand, two hundred, and ninety days is approximately three and one-half years with a few days added, and the time period apparently includes the second coming of Christ and the early judgments which follow.
- 3) The blessing described in Daniel 12:12 which will come after 1,335 days includes not only the time of great tribulation, the second coming of Christ, and the judgments, but also the establishment of Christ's blessed millennial reign upon the earth.

- b. Accordingly, the time period for the Great Tribulation is specified as forty-two months, or three and one-half years.

**Revelation 11:2** *"But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city FOR 42 MONTHS."*

**Revelation 13:5** *"The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority FOR FORTY-TWO MONTHS."*

**Daniel 7:25** *"He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for A TIME, TIMES, AND HALF A TIME."*

4. The Great Tribulation clearly will end with the second coming of Jesus Christ.

- a. According to Daniel, the period concludes with the Son of Man coming from heaven and all nations coming under His dominion.

**Daniel 7:13-14** *"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me WAS ONE LIKE THE SON OF MAN, COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into His presence. HE was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and HIS KINGDOM IS ONE THAT WILL NEVER BE DESTROYED."*

**Matthew 26:62-64** *"Then the high priest stood up and said TO JESUS, 'Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?' But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to Him, 'I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, THE SON OF GOD.' 'Yes, it is as you say,' Jesus replied. 'But I say to all of you: In the future you will see THE SON OF MAN sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One AND COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."*

- b. The wicked king and government which precede the second coming of Christ will be destroyed.

**Daniel 7:25-26** "He (i.e. "the Antichrist") will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. But the court will sit, and HIS POWER WILL BE TAKEN AWAY AND COMPLETELY DESTROYED FOREVER." Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His (i.e. "Son of God's") kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey Him.'

- c. After the Antichrist's wicked kingdom is destroyed by Jesus Christ at His second coming, the everlasting kingdom will be brought in which will, of course, be characterized first by the millennial kingdom, then by the ultimate government of God in the new heaven and the new earth.

**Daniel 7:27** "Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. HIS (i.e. "Son of God's") KINGDOM WILL BE AN EVERLASTING KINGDOM, and all rulers will worship and obey Him."

5. The Old Testament doctrine is relatively complete, but to this, New Testament revelation can be added.

- a. According to Daniel, the end time will be characterized religiously by an atheistic religion headed up by the world ruler.

**Daniel 11:36-39** "The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, BUT WILL EXALT HIMSELF ABOVE THEM ALL. Instead of them, HE WILL HONOR A GOD OF FORTRESSES; a god unknown to his fathers he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price."

- 1) He is described in these verses as an absolute ruler who disregards all previous gods and magnifies himself above God.
- 2) He honors only the god of forces, that is, the god of war. He is a materialist and an atheist.

- b. His kingdom ends in a gigantic war described by Daniel.

**Daniel 11:40-45** "At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission. But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him."

- 1) Armies from the South, from the North, and from the East push on him.
- 2) Although apparently he is able to resist them for a time, the battle is still raging at the time of the second coming of Christ, which ends the Great Tribulation.

## **The Doctrine of the Great Tribulation in the New Testament**

1. When asked by His disciples when His second coming would occur and the age would end, Christ gives to them first of all a series of signs which have been for us, for the most part, already fulfilled, events and situations which characterize the age between the first and second comings of Christ (see Matthew 24:3-14).
2. Then, in Matthew 24:15-29, Christ, in answer to their question about specific signs, describes the Great Tribulation itself.
  - a. He warns that it will begin when men see *“the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place”* (v. 15), referring to the desecration of the Temple and the Mediterranean ruler’s putting himself in God’s place in the Temple.
  - b. He warns the children of Israel that when this event occurs, which will apparently be identified as a specific event on a given day, they are to flee for their lives to the mountains.

**Matthew 24:15-20** *“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— THEN LET THOSE WHO ARE IN JUDEA FLEE TO THE MOUNTAINS. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.”*

- 1) Immediately following the Antichrist’s takeover of the temple mount and the construction of an idol in his image placed there, Christ identifies what happens next is the period known as the Great Tribulation; which He says surpasses all other periods of trouble.

**Matthew 24:21** *“FOR THEN SHALL BE GREAT TRIBULATION, such as was NOT SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD TO THIS TIME, no, nor ever shall be.”*

- 2) It is going to be so great in its extent that it will eclipse anything the world has experienced before.
- 3) The Tribulation will be so severe that unless it is shortened (literally, terminated), no human being would be left alive upon the earth.

**Matthew 24:22** *“And except those days SHOULD BE SHORTENED, THERE SHOULD NO FLESH BE SAVED; but for the elect’s sake those days SHALL BE SHORTENED.”*

NOTE: This does not imply, as some have taken from the word “shortened,” that it will be less than forty-two months. It simply means that unless it were terminated by the Second Coming, the Great Tribulation would exterminate the entire human race.

c. In the verses which follow, our Lord describes some of the characteristics of this period.

1) There will be false prophets and false christs (Matthew 24:23-24).

2) There will be false reports that Christ has come secretly (v. 26).

3) He warns His disciples that no one should be deceived at that time, for the second coming of Christ will be a public event as the lightning shines out of the East even unto the West (v. 27).

4) The Tribulation itself is also described in Matthew 24:29 as a time when *“the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.”*

5) This will be followed by the return of Christ.

3. The description of the Great Tribulation given by Christ in answer to the disciples’ question is confirmed by additional information in Revelation 6—18.

a. A scroll with seven seals, described in Revelation 5:1, is unrolled in chapter 6.

**Revelation 5:1** *“Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne A SCROLL with writing on both sides and SEALED WITH SEVEN SEALS.”*

**Revelation 6:1** *“I watched as the Lamb OPENED THE FIRST OF THE SEVEN SEALS...”*

b. As each seal is broken, great catastrophes begin to overtake the world.

1) This begins with the first seal, describing world government (Rev. 6:1-2).

2) This is followed by war (vv. 3-4), famine (vv. 5-6), and the death of the fourth part of the earth (vv. 7-8).

3) The fifth seal represents the martyrs who die in that period (vv. 9-11), and great disturbances in the heavens—including the stars falling from heaven and a great earthquake on the earth, with the sun becoming black and the moon like blood (vv. 12-14).

4) The impressive display of divine power in the world inspires fear on the part of unbelievers, who call on the mountain to fall on them to save them from “the great day of his wrath” (vv. 15-17).

5) When the seventh seal is broken (8:1), there comes out of it another series of seven described as trumpets of the angels (Rev. 8:2—9:21; 11:15-19).

c. The seven trumpets are great judgments that for the most part are catastrophes upon the natural world which result in great loss of life, with the third part of the earth consumed with fire, a third part of the sea becoming blood and destroying a third part of the creatures in the sea, and stars from heaven falling upon a third part of the rivers (8:7-11).

- 1) The fourth trumpet concerns the stars; a third part of the sun, moon, and stars is darkened, and prediction is given of the terrible disasters which will follow with the next three trumpets.
  - 2) The fifth trumpet (9:1-12) pictures unsaved men tormented by demons for five months in terrible agony, but unable even to take their own lives.
  - 3) The sixth trumpet (9:13-21) relates to the great army which comes from the Orient and crosses the River Euphrates to participate in the great war at the end of the tribulation period.
  - 4) The seventh trumpet (11:15) is near the end of the period and anticipates the coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom.
- d. The seventh trumpet, however, issues into another series of seven judgments which fall in rapid succession, described as “vials” or “bowls” of the wrath of God in Revelation 16.
- 1) Each of these is even more destructive than the trumpet judgments, and they constitute the final outpouring of the wrath of God upon the earth, preparatory to the second coming of Christ Himself.
  - 2) The sixth vial is related to preparation for the great battle of God which centers in a place called Armageddon, giving basis for calling this the battle of Armageddon.
    - a) Here the kings of the earth and their armies are gathered to battle.

**Revelation 16:14-16** *“They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, TO GATHER THEM FOR THE BATTLE ON THE GREAT DAY OF GOD ALMIGHTY. ‘Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.’ Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called ARMAGEDDON.”*

- b) The seeming contradiction of Satan inspiring the kings of the earth to rebel against the ruler which Satan himself has put upon the throne of world government is apparently solved by this fact: Satan gathers his forces under their illusion that they are fighting it out for world power, but actually they are being gathered by Satan to oppose the armies that will accompany Christ when He returns to the earth (Rev. 19:14).

**Revelation 19:19** *“Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies GATHERED TOGETHER TO MAKE WAR AGAINST THE RIDER ON THE HORSE (i.e. “Christ”) AND HIS ARMY.”*

- 3) The final vial, described in Revelation 16:17-21, consists of a great earthquake which levels the great cities of the world and brings Babylon into judgment and causes islands and the mountains to disappear.
  - 4) The climax is a great hailstorm, with hailstones weighing a talent—that is, over a hundred pounds—which destroy what is left.
4. Needless to say, the world is in chaos and in destruction and in war at the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ when He comes to set up His kingdom and restore order to the earth.

## Conclusion

1. What a false dream it has been for some theologians to imagine a world getting better and better, gradually being subdued by the Gospel, and in this way being brought into obedience to Christ!
  - a. Rather, Scripture describes the world in an awful climax of wickedness and rebellion against God, headed by a world ruler who is an atheist, a blasphemer, and a persecutor of all who are identified with God.
  - b. The righteous kingdom of God on earth will be brought in by the second coming of Christ, not by human effort, and will be a dramatic judgment upon wickedness in the world as well as a wonderful deliverance for those who have put their trust in Christ in those tragic days.
2. The fact that the Great Tribulation is so terrible, designed for the unbeliever and for the blasphemer rather than for the child of God, is another reason why many believe that the rapture of the church will occur before this awful time of trouble.
  - a. Significantly, the church is never mentioned in any passage relating to the Great Tribulation; though men will come to Christ who are described as saints or holy ones, never are the specific terms used that would relate them to the church.
  - b. Instead, they are saved Jews and saved Gentiles, many of them subject to martyrdom, and only a relatively few survive in the period.
3. Taken as a whole, the Great Tribulation is a prelude to the second coming of Christ, making clear how necessary divine intervention in the world scene is—both for judgment of the wicked and for deliverance of the saints—and providing a sharp contrast between the darkness of the hour of the Tribulation and the glory of the kingdom which will follow.



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Doctrine #45 – The Great Tribulation

1. Read Pages 1-8 from the Doctrine#45 Study Guide by **Wednesday, July 10<sup>th</sup>** (NOTE: 2 weeks from now!!!).
2. Answer the following Questions about “The Great Tribulation” as you read:

**a. The Great Tribulation in Contrast with General Tribulation**

- 1) Why has “much confusion” arisen concerning the doctrine of the Great Tribulation? (page 1, top)
  
- 2) What does the concept of “tribulation” imply? (page 1, top)
  
- 3) True or False. According to Scripture, all men experiences various experiences and situations in life which involve “tribulations”, but these “trials of life” are not the same as specific events and judgments that will occur during a time period the Bible describes as “the Great Tribulation period”. (page 1, middle; Job 5:7; John 16:33)
  
- 4) In contrasts of general intimations of trials and troubles that afflict the human race, Scripture speaks of a special time of trouble at the end of the age, specifically a time of great tribulation which will continue for “how long”? (page 1, bottom)

**b. The Old Testament Doctrine of the Great Tribulation Period**

- 1) What are some of the earliest Scriptures verses in the Bible that hint of Israel’s special time of great tribulation in the latter days? (page 1, bottom)

- 2) What does Jeremiah “predict” in Jeremiah 30:3? (page 2, top)
  
- 3) The Great Tribulation period is also called what by Jeremiah? (page 2, middle; Jeremiah 30:7)
  
- 4) According to Daniel 9:27, when does the Great Tribulation period actually begin? (page 2, bottom)
  
- 5) How long will Israel be persecuted during the Great Tribulation period on this earth?  
(page 2, bottom; Revelation 11:2, 13:5; Daniel 7:25)
  
- 6) What is probably included in the 1,335 days mentioned by Daniel? (page 3, top; Daniel 12:12)
  
- 7) According to Scripture, when will the Great Tribulation clearly end?  
(page 3, bottom; Daniel 7:13-14; Matthew 26:62-64)
  
- 8) What happens to the “wicked king” (i.e. “the Antichrist”) and his world-wide government when Jesus Christ returns? (page 4, top; Daniel 7:25-26; also see Revelation 19:20)
  
- 9) According to Daniel, how will the end time be “religiously” characterized?  
(page 4, middle; Daniel 11:36-39)
  
- 10) According to Daniel 11:36-39, the Antichrist will “exalt and magnify himself” above “what” and will proclaim himself “what”? (page 4, bottom; see also 2Thessalonian 2:4)

- 11) According to Daniel 11:40-45, the Antichrist's kingdom is engaged in what when Christ returns to destroy him and his armies? (page 4, bottom – page 5, top)

**c. The Doctrine of the Great Tribulation in the New Testament**

- 1) According to Matthew 24:15, Jesus said the Great Tribulation Period will begin when?  
(page 5, middle)
- 2) What does Jesus warn the children of Israel to “do” when the Great Tribulation Period sign is revealed? (page 5, middle; Matthew 24:15-20)
- 3) True or False. The Great Tribulation Period will be so horrible, it will be like WWII when it comes to all of the world-wide chaos and military destruction that will take place.  
(page 5, bottom; Matthew 24:21)
- 4) According to Jesus, if the days of the Great Tribulation had not been “shortened” what would have happened? (page 5, bottom; Matthew 24:22)
- 5) True or False. Jesus promised that the Great Tribulation, which most Scriptures describe as a time period lasting three and one-half years, will be “cut short” because of the “elect”. This means that God will not allow it to actually last the full 42 months. (page 5, bottom)
- 6) The description of the Great Tribulation given by Christ in answer to His disciples' question is confirmed by additional information in what portion of Scripture? (page 6, middle)
- 7) What is “opened” in heaven which begins the Great Tribulation Judgments on the earth? (Rev 6:1)

- 8) Describe what takes place on earth as represented by the breaking of the “fifth seal”. (page 6, bottom)
- 9) True or False. When the seals are being broken in heaven and God’s judgments are being displayed on earth, most people repent of their sins and beg God to save them.  
(page 6, bottom; Revelation 6:15-17)
- 10) The seven trumpet judgments, that follow the seven seal judgments of God, for the most part are what?  
(page 6, bottom)
- 11) The fifth trumpet judgment “pictures” what? (page 7, top; Revelation 9:1-12)
- 12) What does the seventh trumpet judgment issue in? (page 7, middle; Revelation 16)
- 13) What does the sixth “bowl” (or “vial”) judgment relate to? (page 7, middle; Revelation 16:14-16)
- 14) The seeming “contradiction” of Satan inspiring the kings of the earth to rebel against the ruler which Satan himself has put upon the throne of world government is apparently solved by what fact?  
(page 7, bottom; see also Revelation 19:19)
- 15) What does the final “bowl” (or “vial”) judgment consist of? (page 7, bottom; Revelation 16:17-21)

16) What supernatural disaster takes place which is the “final climax” of God’s judgment upon man during the Great Tribulation Period? (page 7, bottom; Revelation 16:21)

#### **d. Conclusion**

- 1) The righteous kingdom of God on earth will be brought in by the second coming of Christ and “not” by what (which some Christian denominations, like “Catholics”, teach)? (page 8, top)
  
- 2) The fact that the Great Tribulation is so terrible is another reason why many believe “what” will occur before this awful time of trouble? (page 8, middle)
  
- 3) True or False. The church is never mentioned in any passage relating to the Great Tribulation which is a good reason to believe that “true believers” will be removed from the earth right before God’s final judgment on the earth begins. (page 8, middle)
  
- 4) Taken as a whole, the Great Tribulation is a prelude to the second coming of Christ, making clear “what” and providing a sharp contrast between “what”? (page 8, middle-bottom)