

### 38. The Great Tribulation

- The Great Tribulation is a seven-year period of time that will end with the second coming of Christ. According to Daniel, the official start of this period is the signing of the covenant (peace treaty) between Israel and the antichrist (Daniel 9:27), which will probably occur shortly after the rapture (refer to Luke 17:26-30; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; 2 Thessalonians 2:6-9). Twice the Bible uses the phrase "great tribulation" to describe this period of time. "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will" (Matthew 24:21). Martyrs from the "great tribulation" will stand before the throne and before the Lamb in heaven, a great multitude which no one will be able to count (Revelation 7:14).

- These seven years will be a time of pain and suffering and God's judgment unlike any other time in human history, resulting in the death of billions of people (Revelation 6:8, 9:15). "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short" (Matthew 24:22). On the other hand, the greatest revival in human history will occur during the Great Tribulation. So many people will be saved that no one will be able to count them (Revelation 7:14). At the same time, Jews and followers of Christ will be mercilessly persecuted and killed.

- Many verses throughout the Bible describe the Great Tribulation (Isaiah 24:1-23; Jeremiah 25:12-38, 30:4-7; Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; Revelation 4-20). Jeremiah describes it as "the time of Jacob's distress" (Jeremiah 30:7). Daniel says it will be "a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time" (Daniel 12:1). In 1 Thessalonians that period is described as "destruction" that will come upon the people of the world suddenly "like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Revelation describes God's devastating 21 judgments that will claim the lives of billions of people during those seven difficult years (Revelation 6, 8, 9, 11, 15, 16).

- Scripture is very clear that the duration of the Great Tribulation will be seven prophetic years. A prophetic year is 360 days long, rather than 365 days. God's two witnesses will "prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days" during the first half of the Tribulation (Revelation 11:3). The Israeli Jewish remnant will be miraculously protected and "nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days" by God for the second half of the Tribulation (Revelation 12:6). This adds up to 2,520 days, or seven prophetic years (360 days per year). Daniel says that the antichrist will "make a firm covenant" with the Jews "for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering" (Daniel 9:27). This "one week" represents seven prophetic years (refer to Daniel 9). The phrase "time, times, and half a time" (time = 1 year, times = 2 years, half a time = half a year), or three and a half years is used three times in the Bible to describe half of the Great Tribulation (Daniel 7:25, 12:7; Revelation 12:14). In all three cases, the phrase describes the second half of the Tribulation. "Forty- two months" (three and a half years) is used twice in the Bible to describe the second half of the Tribulation period (Revelation 11:2, 13:5).

- What is the purpose of this seven-year period of suffering, persecution and death? There are at least four reasons to consider. First, God's name will be magnified throughout the world, especially to the Jewish people. As a result of the Ezekiel 38 battle, which probably occurs shortly before the Tribulation, the Lord will be made known in the sight of many nations and they will know that He is Lord (Ezekiel 38:23). "My holy name I will make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not let My holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel" (Ezekiel 39:7). Following the Ezekiel 38 battle, God's mighty power will continue to be displayed throughout the Tribulation period. Second, God desires as many people as possible to be saved before the end of the age. The Great Tribulation will witness the greatest revival in human history (Revelation 7:9-17) as people are tested and compelled to make a decision for or against Christ (Revelation 3:10). During the Tribulation, hundreds of Bible prophecies will be fulfilled, and the witness of fulfilled prophecy will cause many people to believe (John 14:28-29). Third, the wicked will be judged. All those who refuse to put their trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior will experience the wrath and judgment of God. Satan, the beast (antichrist), the false prophet and demons (evil angels) will also be judged. Fourth, God will use this time of testing to prepare the Jewish people for their Messiah. They will be brought through the fire to refine and test them so that they will say "the Lord is my God" (Zechariah 13:8-9). When Jesus Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation riding on a white horse, many Jews will finally recognize Him as their Messiah and will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son (Zechariah 12:10-12; Revelation 19:11). While the Great Tribulation will be a time of unparalleled suffering, persecution, judgment and death, God's sovereign purposes will be accomplished for His honor and glory.