

The Great Tribulation

I. Two Timeframes Described in The Olivet Discourse

- a. In His Olivet Discourse, Jesus describes significant events and regional/global trends that will function as timing indicators to aid the praying church in discerning the urgency of the hour. He outlines two distinct time frames: 1) The Great Tribulation, which encompasses the final 3 ½ years of this age, and 2) The Beginning of Birth Pains, referring to the decades leading up to the Great Tribulation.

(Matthew 24:21 NASB) “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will again”

(Matthew 24:8: NASB) “But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pains.”

- b. Daniel’s “70th week” marks the final seven years of this age before Christ's return. This period will begin when the Antichrist “confirms a covenant with the many for one week” **(Daniel 9:27)**, leading to the Jewish people instituting sacrifices on the temple mount (likely with a third temple being built).

(Daniel 9:27 NASB) “And he [Antichrist] will confirm a covenant with the many for one week [7 years] ... but in the middle of the week [3 ½ years] he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering...”

- In Daniel 9, The Angel Gabriel tells Daniel that there’s 6 redemptive purposes for the 70 weeks **(Daniel 9:24)**: 1) To finish the wrongdoing, 2) to make an end of sin, 3) To make atonement for guilt, 4) To bring in everlasting righteousness, 5) To seal up vision and prophecy, 6) To anoint the Most Holy Place.

II. The Abomination of Desolation and The Beginning of the Great Tribulation

(Matthew 24:15-19 NASB) “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place—let the reader understand— 16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 17 Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get things out of his house. 18 And whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. 19 But woe to those women who are pregnant, and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 Moreover, pray that when you flee, it will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. 21 For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will again. 22 And if those days had not been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”

- a. Jesus quoted the prophet Daniel by mentioning “the abomination of desolation (A.O.D.)” as a significant event marking the beginning of the Great Tribulation. According to Daniel, in the middle of the final seven-year period (3½ years in), the Antichrist will be filled with rage against the Holy Covenant (God’s eternal covenant with the Jewish people). This will lead him to break his covenant with Israel, halt the Jewish sacrifices, and institute the A.O.D., which is characterized by the Antichrist “desecrating” and “desolating” the temple.

(Daniel 9:27 NASB) “And he will confirm a covenant with the many for one week [period of 7 years], but in the middle of the week [3 ½ years] he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come the one who makes desolate, until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, gushes forth on the one who makes desolate.”

(Daniel 11:30-31 NASB) “For ships of Kittim will come against him [The Antichrist]; therefore he will withdraw in fear and will return and curse the holy covenant and take action; so he will come back and pay attention to those who abandon the holy covenant. 31 Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation.”

- b. In the New Testament, Paul reveals that the A.O.D. will occur when the Antichrist takes his seat in the temple of God and declares himself superior to all other gods. For a period of 1,290 days, the Antichrist will set up the abomination of desolation and rule from the temple mount in Jerusalem. This is why Jesus specifically instructed those in Judea (southern Israel including Jerusalem) to flee to the mountains (desert/wilderness) during this time. The prophet Jeremiah referred to this strenuous period of 3 ½ years as "*Jacob's Distress (trouble).*"

(2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 NASB) "No one is to deceive you in any way! For it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God."

(Daniel 12:11 NASB) "And from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days [just over 3 ½ years]"

(Jeremiah 30:7 NASB) "Woe, for that day is great, there is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's distress...."

- c. Jesus warned that when the Antichrist sets up the A.O.D., there will be a "*great tribulation, such as has not occurred from the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will occur again.*" This term, "*great tribulation,*" refers to the severe trials and challenges that will unfold during the final 3 ½ years. It will be a time of immense pressure for the "*elect,*" the Jewish people and believers in Christ who stand with Israel. This period of hardship is not due to God's judgment upon the "*elect*", but rather the Antichrist's intense rage and hostility directed towards us. Due to the severity of the Great Tribulation, in His mercy and kindness God chose to "*cut short*" it's duration to 3 ½ years.

(Daniel 12:6-10 NASB) "...How long will it be until the end of these wonders?" 7...it would be for a time [1 year], times [2 years], and half a time [1/2 of a year]; and as soon as they finish smashing the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed....10 Many will be purged, cleansed, and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand"

(Revelation 12:17 NASB) "So the dragon was enraged with the woman [Israel], and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus."

(Revelation 13:7-10 NASB) "It was also given to him [Antichrist] to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority was given to him over every tribe, people, language, and nation, 8 All who live on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written since the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slaughtered. 9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear. 10 If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints."

III. Trends related to the Great Tribulation

(Matthew 24:9-14 NASB) "Then they will hand you over to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. 10 And at that time many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will rise up and mislead many people. 12 And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will become cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end is the one who will be saved. 14 This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."

- a. Hand you over to tribulation and kill you, you will be hated by all nations because of My name - It is essential to recognize that God allows believers to endure trials and tribulations to refine and purify us, ultimately leading to greater spiritual maturity and unwavering commitment to Him. These experiences shape us so that "*the spirit of Glory rests upon us.*" The intense pressures that the end-time church will face from the Antichrist and his empire are intended to cultivate a mature and steadfast bride for Christ at the end of the age.

(Daniel 11:33-35 NASB) “And those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for many days. 34 Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy. 35 And some of those who have insight will fall, to refine, purge, and cleanse them until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time.”

(2 Thessalonians 1:4-5 NASB) “As a result, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. 5 This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you indeed are suffering.”

(1 Peter 4:12-14 NASB) “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though something strange were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that at the revelation of His glory you may also rejoice and be overjoyed. 14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory, and of God, rests upon you”

- b. Many will fall away – There will be a “great apostasy”, a widespread departure from the faith. many will be deceived by cultural influences or by the Antichrist and his empire, leading them to willfully reject Jesus. The deconstruction movement is a major indicator that this has already begun.

(2 Thessalonians 2:3 NASB) “No one is to deceive you in any way! For it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction”

- c. Many false prophets will rise up and mislead many people – From the beginning of the Olivet discourse, Jesus warned against deception. Here again, He warns that in the last days there will be many false prophets who will mislead many. This includes false teaching related to the end of the age but also, those who take their cues from the “false prophet” who is connected with the Antichrist.

(1 John 2:22 NASB) “Who is the liar except the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.”

(Revelation 13:13-17 NASB) “He [False Prophet] performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of the sky to the earth in the presence of people. 14 And he deceives those who live on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast [Antichrist], telling those who live on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. 15 And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause all who do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. 16 And he causes all, the small and the great, the rich and the poor, and the free and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, 17 and he decrees that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.”

- d. Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will become cold – Most people on earth will develop a hate for God's law and a diminishing desire for righteousness. Feeling constrained by biblical morality, they will strive to cast off its restraints. As a result, love will become polluted, freezing over and becoming lifeless and void. Luke offers further insight into this phenomenon, suggesting that a culture of betrayal will be widespread throughout the earth.
 - The phrase “love growing cold” originates from the Greek word “psucho,” meaning “to cool by blowing.” Scholars describe it as one’s spiritual vitality being polluted or “chilled” by a malevolent wind. Some say this phrase paints the picture of a lifeless corpse. It perfectly captures the consequences of turbulent times, showing how people will drift further from loving God.

(Isaiah 5:20-21 NASB) “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! 21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight!”

(Psalm 2:2-3 NASB) “The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers conspire together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 3 “Let’s tear their shackles apart and throw their ropes away from us!”

(2 Timothy 3:1-4 NASB) “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, slanderers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.”

(Luke 21:16 NASB) “But you will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, other relatives, and friends, and they will put some of you to death”

- e. The one who endures to the end is the one who will be saved – Despite the severity of the Great Tribulation, Jesus calls his disciples to persevere. Endurance in the face of misfortunes and trials is a common teaching throughout the scriptures. God is committed to raising up a global church that will faithfully endure tribulation until it reaches full maturity.

(Luke 21:19 NASB) “By your endurance you will gain your lives.”

(Romans 5:3-4 NASB) “And not only this, but we also celebrate in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope”

(James 1:12 NASB) “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

- f. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world – The Gospel of the Kingdom encompasses not only the message of salvation but also the promise of Jesus' second coming and the establishment of His unshakable kingdom. God is raising up a resilient and enduring Church to proclaim this comprehensive Gospel with boldness to the ends of the earth. As a result of the faithful witness of the church, a great harvest of souls will be brought into the Kingdom.

(Daniel 7:13-14 NASB) “And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a son of man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. 14 And to Him was given dominion, Honor, and a kingdom, so that all the peoples, nations, and populations of all languages Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.”

(Acts 4:29-31 NASB) “And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant it to your bond-servants to speak Your word with all confidence, 30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.”