

CHAPTER TEN

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

We come now in our studies to a time in the experience of the world known as the **Great Tribulation**. When those who have been chosen by God and redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ, have been saved and taken out of this world, a period of time begins the description of which is enough to cause the blood to run cold. I have set through some spine tingling horror movies, and listened to some scary stories, but they all fade into insignificance in comparison to that which is yet to come upon this world. As we read the account of the tribulation we begin to understand, to a degree, how God looks at the sin of rejecting His Son. I sat down the other evening to read that portion that pertains to the tribulation, as I read my mind became so troubled, and my heart was so distressed, that I became physically ill because of those things that are yet to be. I was not able to complete the reading in one sitting the weight and the awesomeness of the punishment of God was more than I could possibly comprehend.

THE DAY OF THE LORD

Harry A. Ironside defines the day of the Lord as:

. . . When at last the day of grace is ended the day of the Lord will succeed it. . . . The day of the Lord follows [the rapture]. It will be the time when the judgments of God are poured out upon the earth. It includes the descent of the Lord with all His saints to execute judgment on His foes and to take possession of the kingdom . . . and to reign in righteousness for a thousand glorious years.

The term “**Day of the Lord**” occurs in the following passages: Isaiah 2:12; 13:6, 9; Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11,31; 3:14; Amos 5:18 (twice), 20; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14 (twice) ; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:5; Acts 2:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10. In addition, the phrase *that day* or *the day* or *the great day* occurs more than seventy-five times in the Old Testament. The frequency with which it occurs will evidence its importance in the prophetic Scriptures. These passages reveal that the idea of judgment is paramount in all of them. This is so clearly brought out in Zephaniah 1:14-18 ""The great day of the LORD is near-- near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the LORD will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. (15) That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, (16) a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers. (17) I will bring distress on the people and they will walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD. Their blood will be poured out like dust and their entrails like filth. (18) Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the Lord's wrath. In the fire of his jealousy the whole world will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live in the earth."" This judgment includes not only the specific judgments upon Israel and the nations at the end of the tribulation that are associated with the second advent, but, from a consideration of the passages themselves, includes judgments that extend over a period of time prior the second advent. It is proper to conclude that the “**Day of The Lord**” will include the time of the Great Tribulation.

It is evident that the events within the “**Day of the Lord**” are indeed momentous, and a study of this period must include a study of a great part of the prophetic Scriptures. It will include the prophesied events of the tribulation period, such as: The federation of states into a Roman Empire (Dan 2 and 7); the rise of the political ruler of this empire, who makes a covenant with Israel (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 13:1-10); the formulation of a false religious system under the false prophet (Rev. 13:11-18); the pouring out of the judgments under the seals (Rev. 6); The separation of the 144,000 witnesses (Rev. 7); the trumpet judgments (Rev. 8-11); the rise of God's witnesses

(Rev. 11); the persecution of Israel (Rev. 12); the pouring out of the bowl judgments (Rev. 16); the overthrow of the false professing church (Rev. 17 and 18) the events of the campaign of Armageddon (Rev. 16:16; 19:17-21); the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 24:14). It will also include the prophesied events connected with the second advent, such as: the return of the Lord (Matt. 24:29-30); the resurrection of Old Testament and tribulation saints (John 6:39-40; Rev. 20:4); The destruction of the Beast and all his armies and the False Prophet and his followers in the Beast worship (Rev. 19:11-21); the judgment on the nations (Matthew 25:31-46); the regathering of Israel (Ezek. 37:1-14); the judgment on living Israel (Ezek. 20:33-38); the restoration of Israel to the land (Amos 9:15); the binding of Satan (Rev. 20:2-3). Further it will include all the events of the millennial age, with the final revolt of Satan (Rev. 20:7-10); the great white throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15); and the purging of the earth (2 Pet. 3:10-13). These and many related subjects must then be studied.

A closely related term, which has brought confusion into the minds of some, is the term *Day of Christ*. Scofield says:

The expression "day of Christ," occurs in the following passages: 1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16. A.V. has "day of Christ," 2 Thess.. 2:2, incorrectly, for "**Day of the Lord**." (Isa.. 2:12; Rev. 19:11-21). The "**Day of Christ**" relates wholly to the reward and blessing of saints at His coming, as "**Day of the Lord**" is connected with judgment.

Scroggie writes:

It would appear that this event, which is frequently referred to as the "**Day of Christ**," must be distinguished from the "**Day of the Lord**" of 1 Thess.. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2 R.V. The latter expression comes from the Old Testament, and relates to Christ's universal kingdom; but the former expression is found in the New Testament only, and relates to His advent for the church.

It therefore appears that two separate programs are in view when these two expressions are used. They can not be made to refer to the same event. In each case in which "**Day of Christ**" is used it is used specifically in reference to the expectation of the Church, her translation, glorification, and examination for reward.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION PERIOD IN SCRIPTURE

(Deu 4:30-31 NNAS)

"When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice. {31} "For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.

Isa 2:19 NNAS

Men will go into caves of the rocks And into holes of the ground Before the terror of the LORD And the splendor of His majesty, When He arises to make the earth tremble.

Isa 24:1-6 NIV

"See, the LORD is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants-- 2 it will be the same for priest as for people, for master as for servant, for mistress as for maid, for seller as for buyer, for borrower as for lender, for debtor as for creditor. 3 The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered. The LORD has spoken this word. 4 The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish. 5 The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. 6 Therefore a curse

consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left."

Isa 24:19-21 NNAS

The earth is broken asunder, The earth is split through, The earth is shaken violently. {20} The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard And it totters like a shack, For its transgression is heavy upon it, And it will fall, never to rise again. {21} So it will happen in that day, That the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high, And the kings of the earth on earth.

Joel 1:15 NNAS

Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.

Joel 2:1-2 NNAS

Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the LORD is coming; Surely it is near, {2} A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been *anything* like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.

Amos 5:18-20 NNAS

Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, For what purpose *will* the day of the LORD *be* to you? It *will be* darkness and not light; {19} As when a man flees from a lion And a bear meets him, Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall And a snake bites him. {20} *Will* not the day of the LORD *be* darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?

Zep 1:14-18 NNAS

Near is the great day of the LORD, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. {15} A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness, {16} A day of trumpet and battle cry Against the fortified cities And the high corner towers. {17} I will bring distress on men So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against the LORD; And their blood will be poured out like dust And their flesh like dung. {18} Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the LORD'S wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Mat 24:21-22 NNAS For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. {22} "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.

Luke 21:25-26 NNAS

"There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, {26} men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

1 Th 5:3 NNAS

While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

Rev 3:10 NNAS

'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

Rev 6:15-17 NNAS

Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; {16} and they said^ to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; {17} for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

From these Scriptures it is inescapable that the nature or character of this period is that of *wrath* (Zeph. 1:15,18; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10,19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19, *judgment* (Rev. 14:7; 15:4; 16:5, 7; 19:2) *Indignation* (Isa. 26:20-21; 34:1-3), *trial* (Rev. 3:10), *trouble* (Jer. 30:7; Zeph. 1:14-15; Dan. 12:1, *destruction* (Joel 1:15; 1 Thess.. 5:3), *darkness* (Joel 2:2; Amos 5:18; Zeph. 1:14-18), *desolation* (Dan. 9:27; Zeph 1:14-15), *overturning* (Isa. 24:1-4, 19-21), *punishment* (Isa. 24:20-21). No passage can be found to alleviate to any degree the severity of this time that shall come upon the earth.

THE PURPOSE OF THE TRIBULATION

The first great purpose of the tribulation is to prepare the nation Of Israel for her Messiah. The prophecy of Jeremiah 30:7 makes it clear that this time that is coming has particular reference to Israel, for it is "the time of Jacob's trouble."

Jer 30:7 NNAS

'Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it;
And it is the time of Jacob's distress,
But he will be saved from it.

Gerald Stanton in *Kept From the Hour*, writes:

The tribulation is primarily Jewish. This fact is borne out by Old Testament Scriptures (Deut. 4:30; Jer. 30:7; Ezek. 20:37; Dan 12:1; Zech. 13:8-9), by the Olivet Discourse of Christ (Matt. 24:9-26), and by the book of Revelation itself (Rev. 7:4-8; 12:1-2; 17, etc.). It concerns "Daniel's people," the coming of "false Messiah," the preaching of the "gospel of the Kingdom," flight on the "Sabbath," the temple and the "holy place," the land of Judea, the city of Jerusalem, the twelve "tribes of the children of Israel," the "son of Moses," "signs" in the heavens the "Covenant" with the Beast, the "Sanctuary," the "sacrifice and the oblation" of the temple ritual -- these all speak of Israel and prove that the tribulation is largely a time when God deals with His ancient people prior to their entrance into the promised kingdom. The many Old Testament prophecies yet to be fulfilled for Israel further indicate a future time when God will deal with this nation (Deut. 30:1-6; Jer. 30:8-10, etc.)

God's purpose for Israel in the Tribulation is to bring about the conversion of a multitude of Jews, who will enter into the blessings of the kingdom and experience the fulfillment of all Israel's covenants. The "Good News" that the King is about to return will be preached (Matt. 24:14) so that Israel may be turned to their deliverer. As John the Baptist preached such a message to prepare Israel for the second advent.

Mal 4:5-6 NNAS

"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. {6} "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

This witness is seen to be effective in that multitudes of Jews are converted during the tribulation period and are waiting for the Messiah (rev. 7:1-8 and the wise virgins of Matt 25:1-13). It is also God's purpose to populate the millennium with a multitude of saved Gentiles, who are redeemed through the preaching of the believing remnant. This is accomplished in the multitude from "all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" (Rev. 7:9) and in the "sheep" (Matt. 25:31-46) that enter the millennial age. God's purpose, then, is to populate the millennial kingdom by bringing a host from among Israel and the Gentile nations to Himself.

The **second** great purpose of the tribulation is to pour out judgment on unbelieving man and nations. It is stated in Revelation 3:10 "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." This passage has been considered earlier. That this period will reach out to all nations is clearly taught in other Scriptures as well:

Jer 25:32-33 NNAS

Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, evil is going forth from nation to nation, And a great storm is being stirred up from the remotest parts of the earth. {33} "Those slain by the LORD on that day will be from one end of the earth to the other. They will not be lamented, gathered or buried; they will be like dung on the face of the ground.

Isa 26:21 NNAS

For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; And the earth will reveal her bloodshed And will no longer cover her slain.

2 Th 2:12 NNAS

in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

From these Scriptures it will be seen that God is judging the nations of the earth because of their godlessness. The nations of the earth have been deceived by false teaching of the harlot system (Rev. 14:8) and have partaken of the "wine of the wrath of her fornication." They have followed the false prophet in the worship of the beast (Rev. 13:11-18). For this godlessness the nations must be judged. This judgment comes on ". . . the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman . . ." (Rev. 6:15), all of whom "blasphemed the name of God . . . and they repented not to give him glory" (Rev. 16:9). Since the kingdom to follow is a reign of righteousness, this judgment must be viewed as another step in the progress of God's program in dealing with sin so that the Messiah may reign. This program of judgment on sinners constitutes the second purpose of the tribulation period.