Grace Evangelical Free Church January 8, 2023

**Matthew 24:21** Tribulation

In the Bible we read of a period of unparcelled warfare, distress and suffering which is to break upon this troubled world. It is called “The Great Tribulation” (**Matthew 24:21-22**, **29-30**; **Mark 13:24**; **Revelation 7:14**); “**the time of Jacob’s trouble**” (**Jeremiah 30:7**; **Daniel 12:1**); “**the Day of the Lord**” (**Isaiah 13:9**; **Joel 2:1**; **Amos 5:18,20**; **Zephaniah 1:14-18**; **2 Thessalonians 2:2**; **Revelation 6:12-17**); and “**the day of vengeance of our God**” (**Isaiah 61:2**).

**Matthew 24:21**: **“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.**”

* **Grammatical Usage:** “**tribulation**” or in the Greek, “thlipsis” meaning, “persecution, affliction, distress”; “**never shall be**” or “οὐ genētai” – a relative clause denoting greatest of all time.
* **Literal Interpretation:** “**For at that time there will be great distress, the kind that hasn’t taken place from the beginning of the world until now and never will again.**”
* **Contextual/Comparison:** God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. As so very many scriptures refer to the period of time known as the “Tribulation,” it is unwise to be dogmatic concerning every detail of so intricate a subject; but concerning the fact of the Tribulation there is no room for doubt at all:

1. The Tribulation will be ushered in by the appearance of a very powerful and sinister figure whom the scriptures call the Antichrist.

He will seem to be the greatest warrior, statesman and religious leader the world has ever seen (**Ezekiel 28:3-7**). He is referred to in the following scriptures: **Daniel 7:2-27**; **9:25-27**; **11:36-12:3**; **2 Thess. 2:1-12**; **1 John 2:18, 22**; **4:3**; **2 John 7**; **Rev. 13:11-18** and **19:20**. This dread personality may be alive on the earth now. He is also called “**The man of lawlessness**” (**2 Thess. 2:3**) “**the man doomed to destruction**” (**2 Thess. 2:3**); “**the wicked (or lawless) one**” (**2 Thess. 2:8**); and the prophet Daniel speaks of him as a “**contemptible person**” (**Daniel 11:21**). He will be energized by Satan and will be the Devil’s counterfeit Christ. Notice the seven striking contrasts:

THE ANTICHRIST

(1) Exalts himself (**2 Thessalonians 2:4**)

(2) Comes to domineer and destroy (**Dan. 11:39**)

(3) Comes to do his own will (**Daniel 11:36**)

(4) Like a lamb and a dragon (**Revelation 13:11**)

(5) Has a bride (**Revelation 17**)

(6) Claims falsely to be God (**2 Thess. 2:4**)

(7) Blasphemes God (**Revelation 13:6**)

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

(1) Humbled Himself (**Philippians 2:8**)

(2) Came to serve and save (**Mt. 18:11**)

(3) Came to do His Father’s will (**John 4:34**)

(4) Is a Lamb and a Lion (**Revelation 5:5-6**)

(5) Has a Bride (**Revelation 21:9**)

(6) Was (and is) God (**John 1:1**)

(7) Exalts God (**John 14:28**)

The co-worker of the Antichrist will be the False Prophet (**Revelation 13:11-18**; **19:20**), and he will control the military system (**Revelation 13:4**); commerce (**Revelation 13:17**); worship (**Revelation 13:15**); and he will claim to be God (**2 Thessalonians 2:4**).

2. At the beginning of the Tribulation period the Antichrist will make a covenant with the Jews, which he will break by setting up the abomination of Desolation in the temple and by demanding universal worship ushering in the Great Tribulation.

Compare **Daniel 9:2** to our Lord’s words in **Matthew 24:15** and **Daniel 12:11**. Now see **2 Thess. 2:4**; **Revelation 12:12** and **13:4**! At first, the true character of Antichrist will not be generally recognized, but after he breaks the covenant which he has made with the Jews, then he will be recognized as the evil and sinister being that he is. Then there will be worldwide war (**Matthew 24:6**; **Revelation 6:4**; **16:12-16**); famines, pestilence and death (**Matthew 24:7, 21-22**; **Revelation 6:5-8**); earthquakes and other terrible judgments (**Mark 13:24-25**; **Luke 21:11, 25, 26**; **Revelation 6:12-17**; **16:1-11**).

3. During the Tribulation the Jews will proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom; many will be saved, but they will be severely persecuted for their faith in God and will suffer martyrdom.

Yes, what a comfort it is to know that after the church age has ended and all the redeemed have been “**caught up**” to be with the Lord in Heaven (**1 Thess. 4:16-17**), an innumerable company will be saved. They must go through the Tribulation, and they can never belong to the Bride and Body of Christ, the Church, but they will be “**before His throne and serve Him day and night in His temple**” (**Revelation 7:15**). During the Tribulation the gospel of the kingdom will be preached by the Jews who will be the true witnesses of Jehovah (**Isaiah 43:10, 12**), and those who are saved, because of their faith in God and their refusal to bow to Antichrist and worship the Beast, will be persecuted and suffer martyrdom (**Revelation 6:9-11**; **13:15-18**).

4. The Great Tribulation will culminate in the Battle of Armageddon, which will be fought in the vicinity of Jerusalem and which will end in Christ Himself being Victor.

It will be a solemn and terrible time, the most stupendous conflict in the history of the world (**Zechariah 14:1-8**). Christ Himself will return in power and great glory and will put down His enemies and set up His millennial kingdom (**Zechariah 14:9, 16**; **Revelation 19:16**).

5. The Church will not go through the Tribulation. Subsequently we shall see why.

How important it is, therefore, that if we would escape these days which are to come to pass upon the earth, we should heed **Isaiah 55:7** and having done that, that we warn the lost to flee from the wrath to come!

* **Conclusion**: Have you abandoned your way and come to the Lord? He is your only hope.