

## THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

Throughout Scripture, the tribulation is associated with “**the day of the Lord**”, that time during which God personally intervenes in history to accomplish His plan.

For the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low; (Isaiah 2:12)

<sup>6</sup> Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come!

<sup>7</sup> Therefore all hands will be feeble, and every human heart will melt.

<sup>8</sup> They will be dismayed: pangs and agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at one another; their faces will be aflame.

<sup>9</sup> Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. (13:6-9)

Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes. (Joel 1:15; read 2:1-31)

Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. (Joel 3:14)

For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. (1 Thessalonians 5:2)

### WHAT IS THE “**DAY OF THE LORD**”?

The phrase “**day of the Lord**” usually identifies events that take place at the end of history (Isaiah 7:18-25) and is often closely associated with the phrase “**that day**.” One key to understanding these phrases is to note that they always identify a span of time during which God personally intervenes in history, directly or indirectly, to accomplish some specific aspect of His plan.

Most people associate **the day of the Lord** with a period of time or a special day that will occur when God’s will and purpose for His world and for mankind will be fulfilled. Some scholars believe that **the day of the Lord** will be a longer period of time than a single day—a period of time when Christ will reign throughout the world before He cleanses heaven and earth in preparation for the eternal state of all mankind. Other scholars believe the day of the Lord will be an instantaneous event when Christ returns to earth to redeem His faithful believers and send unbelievers to eternal damnation.

The phrase “**the day of the Lord**” is used often in the Old Testament:

<sup>13:5</sup> You have not gone up into the breaches, or built up a wall for the house of Israel, that it might stand in battle in the day of the LORD.

<sup>30:3</sup> For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near; it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations. (Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3)

<sup>1</sup> Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near,

<sup>2</sup> a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations.

<sup>11</sup> The LORD utters His voice before His army, for His camp is exceedingly great; He who executes His Word is powerful. For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?

30 “And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke.

31 The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

32 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the Name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

3:14 Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. (Joel 2:1-2, 11, 30-32; 3:14)

18 Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light,

19 as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him.

20 Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it? (Amos 5:18-20)

For the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head. (Obadiah 15)

7 Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests.

14 The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. (Zephaniah 1:7, 14; Zechariah 14:1)

5 “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

6 And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.” (Malachi 4:5-6)

The phrase “the day of the Lord” is used often in the New Testament:

19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;

20 the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts 2:19-21; see 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2)

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. (2 Peter 3:10).

It is also alluded to in other passages:

6:15 Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains,

16 calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,

17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

<sup>16:14</sup> For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. (Revelation 6:15-17; 16:14).

The Old Testament passages dealing with **the day of the Lord** often convey a sense of imminence, nearness, and expectation. This is because the Old Testament passages referring to **the day of the Lord** often speak of both a near and a far fulfillment, as does much of Old Testament prophecy. Some Old Testament passages that refer to the day of the Lord describe historical judgments that have already been fulfilled in some sense (see Isaiah 13:6-22; Ezekiel 30:2-19; Joel 1:15, 3:14; Amos 5:18-20; Zephaniah 1:14-18), while others refers to divine judgments that will take place toward the end of the age (see Joel 2:30-32; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:1, 5).

The New Testament calls it a day of “**wrath**”, a day of “**visitation**”, and the “**great day of God Almighty**” (Revelation 16:14) and refers to a still future fulfillment when God’s wrath is poured out on unbelieving Israel (Isaiah 22; Jeremiah 30:1-17; Joel 1-2; Amos 5; Zephaniah 1) and on the unbelieving world (Ezekiel 38 & 39; Zechariah 14). The Scriptures indicate that “**the day of the Lord**” will come quickly, like a thief in the night (Zephaniah 1:14-15; 1 Thessalonians 5:2), and therefore Christians must be watchful and ready for the coming of Christ at any moment.

Besides being a time of judgment, it will also be a time of salvation as God will deliver the remnant of Israel, fulfilling His promise that “**all of Israel will be saved**” (Romans 11:26), forgiving their sins and restoring His chosen people to the land He promised to Abraham (see Isaiah 10:27; Jeremiah 30:19-31, 40; Micah 4; Zechariah 13). The final outcome of the day of the Lord will be as stated in Isaiah 2:12-17:

<sup>12</sup> For the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low;

<sup>13</sup> against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up; and against all the oaks of Bashan;

<sup>14</sup> against all the lofty mountains, and against all the uplifted hills;

<sup>15</sup> against every high tower, and against every fortified wall;

<sup>16</sup> against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft.

<sup>17</sup> And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.

The ultimate or final fulfillment of the prophecies concerning **the day of the Lord** will come at the end of history when God, with wondrous power, will punish evil and fulfill all His promises, Deuteronomy 4:30:

When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return to the LORD your God and obey His voice.

The Tribulation Period is described in the following verses, Jeremiah 30:7:

Alas! That day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it.

Daniel 12:1:

At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.

And we have this description of The Tribulation that attends **the day of the Lord** – Zephaniah

1:15-16:

<sup>15</sup> A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

<sup>16</sup> day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements.

The tribulation will be marked by various divine judgments, celestial disturbances, natural disasters, and terrible plagues (see Revelation 6 through 16). In His mercy, God sets a limit on the duration of the tribulation in Mark 13:19-20:

<sup>19</sup> For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be.

<sup>20</sup> And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days.

Daniel 9:24-27:

<sup>24</sup> “Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.

<sup>25</sup> Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

<sup>26</sup> And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.

<sup>27</sup> And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

This reveals the purpose and time of the tribulation. This passage speaks of 70 weeks that have been declared against “Your people”. Daniel’s people are the Jews, the nation of Israel, and Daniel 9:24 speaks of a period of time in which God’s purpose is “to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.” God declares that “seventy sevens” will fulfill all these things. The “sevens” are groups of years, so 70 sevens is 490 years. (Some translations refer to 70 “weeks” of years.)

In Daniel 9:25 & 26, the Messiah will be cut off after “seven sevens and sixty-two sevens” (69 total sevens), beginning with the decree to rebuild Jerusalem. In other words, 69 sevens (483 years) after the decree to rebuild is issued, the Messiah will die. Biblical historians confirm that 483 years passed from the time of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the time when Jesus was crucified. Most Christian scholars, regardless of their view of eschatology, have the above understanding of Daniel’s 70 sevens.

God said that 70 weeks had been determined (490 years), but, with the death of the Messiah, we only have 69 weeks accounted for (483 years). This leaves one seven-year period to be fulfilled “to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place”.

This final seven-year period is what we call The Tribulation – the time when God finishes judging Israel and brings them back to Himself.

Daniel 9:27 gives a few highlights of the final week, the seven-year tribulation period: (The antichrist) “he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week (7 years), and for half of

the week (3½ years) he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.” Jesus refers to this passage in Matthew 24:15:

So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

The ruler who confirms the covenant and then sets up the abomination is called “the beast” in Revelation 13. According to Daniel 9:27, the beast’s covenant will be for seven years, but in the middle of this week (3½ years into the tribulation), the beast will break the covenant, putting a stop to the Jewish sacrifices. Revelation 13 explains that the beast will place an image of himself in the temple and require the world to worship him. Revelation 13:5 says that this will go on for 42 months, which is 3½ years (the second half of the tribulation).

And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months.

So, we see a covenant lasting to the middle of the “week” (Daniel 9:27) and the beast who made the covenant demanding worship for 42 months (Revelation 13:5). Therefore, the total length of time is 84 months or seven years.

We also have a reference to the last half of the tribulation in Daniel 7:25.

He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

There, the ruler will oppress God’s people for “a time, times, and half a time” (time = 1 year; times = 2 years; half a time = ½ year; total of 3½ years). This time of oppression against the Jews is also described in Revelation 13:5-7 and is part of the “great tribulation”, the latter half of the seven-year tribulation when the beast, or the Antichrist, will be in power. Revelation 13:5-8:

<sup>5</sup> And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months.

<sup>6</sup> It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming His Name and His dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

<sup>7</sup> Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation,

<sup>8</sup> and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

A further reference to the timing of events in the tribulation is found in Revelation 11:2-3, which speaks of 1,260 days and 42 months (both equaling 3½ years, using the “prophetic year” of 360 days). Also, Daniel 12:11-12 speaks of 1,290 days and 1,335 days from the midpoint of the tribulation. The additional days in Daniel 12 may include time after the tribulation for the judgment of the nations (see Matthew 25:31–46) and time for the setting up of Christ’s millennial kingdom (see Revelation 20:4-6).

In summary, the tribulation is the seven-year period in the end times in which humanity’s decadence and depravity will reach its fullness, with God judging accordingly. Also, during that time, Israel will repent of their sin and receive Jesus as their Messiah, setting up a time of great blessing and restoration (Zephaniah 3:9–20; Isaiah 12 & 35).

### WHAT IS THE TRIBULATION PERIOD?

While on the earth, Christ warned His disciples that they would experience “trouble and

suffering” as a consequence of following Him and living in a fallen world – John 16:33:

I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

However, He also warned them of a “**great tribulation**” which the entire world would experience – Matthew 24:21; Revelation 3:10:

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.

3:10 Because you have kept My Word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

In it, God will judge the **unbelieving world** and save a people who will worship Him during Christ’s Millennial Kingdom. As part of that redeemed group, God will purify Israel and bring her to genuine faith in the Messiah – Zechariah 13:8-9; 12:10-11:

13:8 “In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive.

9 And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon My Name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘They are My people’; and they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

12:10 And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on Me, on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

11 On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

Jeremiah 30:7:

Alas! That day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it.

Romans 11:25-28:

25 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

26 And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will banish ungodliness from Jacob”;

27 “and this will be My Covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

28 As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.

In Matthew 24:21-22, Christ said this about the tribulation:

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.

22 And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

In addition, after this period of tribulation, Christ will return to the earth to establish His Millennial Kingdom. In Matthew 24:29-31, Christ said:

29 “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will

not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

<sup>30</sup> Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

<sup>31</sup> And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

## NAMES OF THE TRIBULATION

What are some of the names of the tribulation in Scripture? There are many.

### 1. The tribulation is called the “*day of the Lord*”.

Adding to what we defined above, in the Old Testament, this term is used of when God judges a nation or nations; however, those are just precursors for God’s ultimate judgment of the world in the end times. Zephaniah 1:18:

Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. In the fire of His jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end He will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Also, Malachi 4:5-6 as stated above:

<sup>5</sup> “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

<sup>6</sup> And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

### 2. The tribulation is called “*the hour of testing*.”

In Revelation 3:10, Christ said:

Because you have kept My Word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.

### 3. The tribulation is called “*Jacob’s trouble*.”

This terminology is used because God will not only judge the unbelieving world during this period, but also do a special work in Israel, to purify her, and prepare her to accept the Messiah – Zechariah 12:10, 14:3-4:

<sup>10</sup> And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on Me, on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

<sup>14:3</sup> Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when He fights on a day of battle.

<sup>4</sup> On that day His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward.

Jeremiah 30:7:

Alas! That day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it.

Zechariah 13:8-14:2:

<sup>13:8</sup> In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive.

<sup>9</sup> And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon My Name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are My people'; and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"

<sup>14:1</sup> Behold, a day is coming for the LORD, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst.

<sup>2</sup> For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

During this period, two-thirds of the Jews living in Israel will die, while one-third of them God will purify through the time of testing. God will judge and purify Israel by bringing the nations of the world against her. Satan and the antichrist will have a role in judging Israel. Revelation 12 describes Satan as a dragon that pursues a woman who gave birth to a son who was taken to heaven. This refers to Satan's persecution of Israel during the tribulation period; however, they will ultimately be saved. Revelation 12:13-16:

<sup>13</sup> And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.

<sup>14</sup> But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.

<sup>15</sup> The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood.

<sup>16</sup> But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth.

Michael, the archangel, will have a role in protecting and delivering Israel during this time of tribulation. Daniel 12:1:

At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.

#### **4. The tribulation is called Daniel's *70th week*.**

What is Daniel's 70th week? It comes from Daniel 9:24-27, which is often called "*God's Prophetic Time Clock*" and "*The Backbone of Bible Prophecy*."

<sup>24</sup> "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.

<sup>25</sup> Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the Word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an Anointed One, a Prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

<sup>26</sup> And after the sixty-two weeks, an Anointed One shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.



<sup>27</sup> And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

As background, Daniel was praying about the future of Israel (Daniel 9:1-3) when the angel, Gabriel, appeared and shared with Daniel about Israel’s future, including the coming of the Messiah.

<sup>1</sup> In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—

<sup>2</sup> in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the Word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

<sup>3</sup> Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking Him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

Consider verse 25:

Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the Word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an Anointed One, a Prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

The angel’s reference to “**weeks**” could also be translated “**sevens**” as in the NIV. This could mean seven days or years. Years makes the most sense because the context deals with Israel’s long-term future, including the coming of the Messiah, and also because Daniel already had been thinking in terms of years (Israel’s seventy years of exile, Daniel 9:2). The angel Gabriel told Daniel that it would be seven sevens (49) plus sixty-two sevens (434) until the Messiah comes. Altogether, that equals 483 years (49 + 434 = 483). From the issuance of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem until the coming of the Messiah, it would be 483 years. Gabriel adds that Jerusalem would be rebuilt in “**distressful times**”. The book of Nehemiah tells us that while Nehemiah led Israel in rebuilding Jerusalem’s walls, there was much persecution. In one scene, the Israelites did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other (see Nehemiah 4:17).

Though Israel was sent back to their land by Cyrus, the issuing of the decree to rebuild Israel was given by King Artaxerxes to Nehemiah in 444 B.C (see Nehemiah 2). When one takes into account that the Jewish calendar was 360 days and not 365 as ours is today, 483 years later would be 33 A.D. — right around the time of Christ’s death. After the 483 years, the Messiah would be killed and “**a people**” would destroy Jerusalem and the temple which happened in AD 70. Then, wars would continue in Israel until the end times. After the gap, there would be one final seven-year period — the 70th week of Daniel. At this point in history, the prophetic gap has lasted almost 2000 years. Are prophetic gaps normal in Scripture? Yes, they are. There is one in Isaiah 9:6:

For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His Name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

The Child being born and the Son being given was fulfilled in Christ’s first coming; however, the government resting on His shoulders won’t happen until His second coming. In the first coming, Christ was a prophet, priest, and sacrifice for the sins of the world. In the second coming, He will be a King who judges and rules the earth. Again, there is a prophetic gap of almost 2000 years, so far.

Now, let’s consider the final seven years of Daniel’s prophecy, which describes the tribulation period. Daniel 9:27 (NIV) says:

He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

The "he" Daniel refers to is the **antichrist** — a powerful end-time figure who will be antagonistic toward God and His people. He will make a seven-year covenant with Israel. Since the context is "there shall be war" (9:26), this probably refers to some type of peace treaty. But in the middle of the seven years, the antichrist will break that treaty by putting an end to the Jewish sacrificial and offering system. He will also set up an abomination at the temple until he experiences divine judgment. The future antichrist resembles the Syrian King, Antiochus, who did similar things to Israel during the intertestamental period, including putting an idol of Zeus in the temple, as prophesied in Daniel 11:21-35. Christ refers to the abomination, which will be set up in the temple in Matthew 24:15-16. This is when the antichrist will unleash an assault specifically on the Jewish people. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, Paul refers to this act of the antichrist in the middle of the tribulation period as well.

<sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

<sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

Therefore, Daniel's 70th week is important because it gives the timeline of the tribulation period. It will last seven years. In the middle of the seven years, the antichrist will break his covenant with Israel and put an idol in the Jewish temple. This seven-year time frame or half of it will be referred to several times in the book of Revelation (12:6, 14, 13:5).

## 5. The tribulation is called the **seven-sealed book**. Revelation 5:1

Then I saw in the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

In the context of Revelation 5, there is a search for someone worthy to open the seven-sealed book, which contains the tribulation's judgments. After a thorough search, Christ, the Lamb who was slain from the foundations of the earth, is found.

Then each seal is opened, leading to successive judgments on the earth. When the seventh seal is opened, it leads to seven trumpets which are further judgments and then seven bowls of wrath which are the final judgments of the Tribulation Period (Revelation 8 & 16). These are detailed between Revelation 6-16.

The specifics of the seals, trumpets, and bowl judgments in Revelation are shared below, as noted by John MacArthur, the six seals include – Revelation 6:2-12:

- Seal 1 – the arrival of antichrist.
- Seal 2 – war.
- Seal 3 – famine.
- Seal 4 – death.
- Seal 5 – martyrdom.
- Seal 6 – earthquake

These correspond closely with the conditions of "**birth pains**" found in Matthew 24:4–7

<sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray.

<sup>5</sup> For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.

<sup>6</sup> And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.

<sup>7</sup> For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

<sup>8</sup> All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

At the time of the sixth seal (earthquake), the people on earth realize they are facing the great wrath of God and the Lamb (Revelation 6:16–17).

Next, the seventh seal brings the second wave of judgments — the seven trumpets:

- First trumpet:  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the earth, trees, and grass are burned up (Revelation 8:7).
- Second trumpet:  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the sea creatures die, and the ships are destroyed (8:8–9).
- Third trumpet:  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the waters are polluted, and many die (8:10–11).
- Fourth trumpet:  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the sun, moon, and stars are darkened (8:12).
- Fifth trumpet: Locusts / demons are released to torment people (9:1–11).
- Sixth trumpet: Four bound demons are released to kill  $\frac{1}{3}$  of humanity (9:13–19).
- Seventh trumpet: Christ's kingdom reign is proclaimed (11:15–18).

The final cluster of judgments are the bowl judgments. These come later in the tribulation period in rapid succession and are extremely severe:

- First bowl – painful sores come on people (Revelation 16:2).
- Second bowl – the sea becomes like blood, and everything in the sea dies (16:3).
- Third bowl – the rivers and springs of water are turned to blood (16:4–7).
- Fourth bowl – the sun scorches people with fire and heat (16:8–9).
- Fifth bowl – darkness and intense pain afflict humanity (16:10–11).
- Sixth bowl – the Euphrates River is dried up to prepare the way for kings from the East (16:12–16).
- Seventh bowl – severe earthquakes split the great city into three parts, cities fall, and severe hail drops from heaven (16:17–21).

### NATURE OF THE TRIBULATION

What are some of the characteristics of the tribulation period?

#### 1. The tribulation will be a time of false religion and apostasy.

Matthew 24:4-5 – because of all the false prophets and false messiahs, many of those who profess Christ will fall away. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, Paul said:

<sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

<sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

This “*rebellion*” will be a massive revolt against God. It may begin among those who believe in God and spread to all people who refuse to accept Christ. Thus, it will include Jews who abandon God and some members of the church whose faith is nominal. While rebellion against God seems widespread even today, as the coming of Christ nears, this apostasy and active opposition against God will intensify.

**2. The tribulation will be a time of wars and rumors of wars** – Matthew 24:6-7.

**3. The tribulation will be a time of disturbances in nature and the heavens.**

Likewise, Revelation 8:12:

The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.

**4. The tribulation will be a time of world-wide plagues and diseases.**

Revelation 6:8:

And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

When it describes a significant portion of the population dying by disease and wild animals, wild animals might be the cause of some of the diseases. This is what happened during the bubonic plague as fleas and rats carried the disease.

**5. The tribulation will be a time of persecution for those who worship God.**

This persecution will be especially focused on Jews and Christians. In Matthew 24:9, Christ said this to His disciples that they would be persecuted. Also, Revelation 12:13 & 17:

<sup>13</sup> And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.

<sup>17</sup> Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

As mentioned, the woman who gave birth to the male child is Israel. When the dragon, representing Satan, makes war with “*the rest of her offspring*”, this probably refers to Christians, including believing Jews.

## MAJOR CHARACTERS IN THE TRIBULATION

Who are the major characters in the tribulation period?

**1. Satan is a major character in the tribulation period.**

In Revelation 12, he is the dragon who persecutes the Jews. In Revelation 13, the dragon gives his power to the antichrist to rule the earth. Revelation 13:2:

And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.

In Revelation 20, at the end of the tribulation when Christ returns, Satan is temporarily bound in the abyss so he can no longer tempt the nations. Revelation 20:1-3:

<sup>1</sup> Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain.

<sup>2</sup> And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,

<sup>3</sup> and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

## 2. The antichrist is a major character in the tribulation period.

In Revelation 13:1, he is symbolized as a beast with ten horns, seven heads, and ten crowns.

And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.

The antichrist will be given power by Satan to rule the earth during the Tribulation Period. At one point, he will experience a wound that he apparently dies from and is raised from the dead, which will cause the world to stand in awe of him and worship him and Satan in Revelation 13:3-4:

<sup>3</sup> One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast.

<sup>4</sup> And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

Then, the antichrist will exalt himself over God and everything called that could be identified as a god – 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4:

<sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

<sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

He will be a narcissist insulting God and heaven – Revelation 13:6:

It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming His Name and His dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

All his worshipers will accept his mark, which will allow them to buy and sell. Those who reject the mark will be put to death – Revelation 13:16-17:

<sup>16</sup> Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead,

<sup>17</sup> so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.

John MacArthur gives further insight on the antichrist. The prefix "anti" can mean "against" or "instead of". So, is the coming Antichrist openly "against" Jesus, or is he a counterfeit pretending to be a messiah figure? Both concepts could be true. He is a counterfeit to the Messiah in that he will make a deceptive treaty with the people of Israel (Daniel 9:27) and pretend to be their savior. Yet he is against Jesus by opposing Jesus and his saints. He also will persecute Israel at the midpoint of Daniel's seventieth week. In sum, he is both a counterfeit and one who opposes Christ.

Debate exists as to whether the antichrist will be a Jew or a Gentile. The evidence for being a Jew is found in Daniel 11:37:

He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all.

The antichrist arises from European nations, the revived Roman empire or as it is today, the European Union. Daniel 7:7–8, 23–25:

<sup>7</sup> After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

<sup>8</sup> I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

<sup>23</sup> “Thus he said: ‘As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces.

<sup>24</sup> As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings.

<sup>25</sup> He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

(See Revelation 13:1) Also, since he is the prince who comes from the people who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70 (see Daniel 9:26), he must come from the Roman Empire, for the Romans were the ones who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.

In Daniel 8:9-14, 23-25 Daniel prophesies that Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a Greek ruling in Syria who desecrated the Jewish temple around 167 BC by instituting Zeus worship in Jerusalem and having a pig slaughtered in the temple. This desolating act seems to prefigure what the antichrist of Daniel 9:27 will do.

While a frightening and powerful figure, the antichrist has a brief career and is destroyed. Paul says that Jesus will eliminate him in 2 Thessalonians 2:8:

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.

Daniel says in Daniel 9:27; 11:45; Revelation 19:20:

<sup>9:27</sup> And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.

<sup>11:45</sup> And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.

<sup>19:20</sup> And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

### **3. The false prophet is a major character in the tribulation period.**

In Revelation, the false prophet is pictured as a beast with two horns who exercises authority on behalf of the antichrist and does miracles to make the world worship the antichrist – Revelation 13:11-12, 16:13:

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.

<sup>12</sup> It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its

inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed.

<sup>13</sup> And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs.

He will force people to accept the antichrist's mark and punish those who will not – Revelation 13:13-17:

<sup>13</sup> It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people,

<sup>14</sup> and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived.

<sup>15</sup> And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.

<sup>16</sup> Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead,

<sup>17</sup> so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.

#### **4. Two prophets of God are major characters in the tribulation period.**

In Revelation 11, two prophets from God will prophesy from Jerusalem for three and half years – the last half of the tribulation period (verses 1-2). If anyone tries to harm them, fire will come from their mouths to consume the people. They will have power to stop the heavens from giving rain and also to call down fire from heaven. Revelation 11:3-6:

<sup>3</sup> And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.

<sup>4</sup> These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

<sup>5</sup> And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed.

<sup>6</sup> They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire.

Many people believe these prophets are Elijah and Moses. Elijah and Moses met with Christ on the mountain during his transfiguration in Matthew 17:1-8. During their earthly ministries, they were known for stopping the rain and bringing fire from heaven. Also, in Malachi 4:5-6, Malachi prophesied that Elijah would come before the Messiah came to judge the earth.

<sup>5</sup> "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

<sup>6</sup> And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."

At Christ's first coming, John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah according to Luke 1:17, but before the second coming, Elijah will come.

These two prophets will eventually be killed by the antichrist, and God will resurrect them from the dead and take them to heaven – Revelation 11:7-12.

## **5. The 144,000 Jewish witnesses are major characters in the tribulation period.**

Revelation 7:1-8 describes how God will seal 144,000 Jews – 12,000 from each tribe. They are sealed so they can be protected from God’s wrath during the Tribulation Period. Revelation 14:4-5 says they were male virgins who were blameless in their conduct.

<sup>4</sup> It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb,

<sup>5</sup> and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.

These will be Jewish preachers who God uses to spread the gospel during the tribulation period. In part, this is believed because after they are presented in Revelation 7:1-17, a large multitude of believers who came out of the tribulation from every nation, tribe, and tongue is shown in heaven worshipping God for His salvation.

## **6. Israel is a major character in the tribulation period.**

As mentioned, Israel will be disciplined by God during the Tribulation Period, purified, and prepared to receive her Messiah (see Zechariah 13:8-9, 12:10, Romans 11:26-27). God will use Satan and the antichrist to discipline her. The antichrist will gather the nations to surround Jerusalem and destroy her (see Zechariah 13-14, Revelation 12). In the midst of this peril, Christ will return to Jerusalem to save the nation, and she will repent for rejecting Him. Zechariah 14:2-4 says:

<sup>2</sup> For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

<sup>3</sup> Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when He fights on a day of battle.

<sup>4</sup> On that day His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward.

And Zechariah 12:10 says:

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on Me, on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

Likewise, Romans 11:26-27 says:

<sup>26</sup> And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will banish ungodliness from Jacob”;

<sup>27</sup> “and this will be My Covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

## **7. A worldwide ecumenical church is a major character in the tribulation period.**

Revelation 17:3-6 describes this church:

<sup>3</sup> And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.

<sup>4</sup> The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and



pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality.

<sup>5</sup> And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations."

<sup>6</sup> And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her, I marveled greatly.

A prostitute is shown riding on a scarlet beast. The scarlet beast is the antichrist, and the prostitute represent a false church. In the Old Testament, Israel is commonly called a prostitute for worshiping other gods (see Hosea 1:2-3, 2:2). The fact that the prostitute is riding the antichrist probably demonstrates that in some way he will use her to rise to power. Commonly in national elections, the religious vote is very powerful; therefore, candidates often appeal to various religious groups to get power. Maybe, the antichrist will do the same. However, Revelation 17:16 says:

<sup>16</sup> And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire,

<sup>17</sup> for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the Words of God are fulfilled.

At some point, the antichrist will destroy the prostitute. This will probably happen at the midway portion of the tribulation when he breaks his peace treaty with Israel, places himself in their temple, and claims to be God (see Daniel 9:27, 2 Thessalonians 2:4). After that, he will persecute all who will not worship him. Revelation 13:14-16 says this about the false prophet and how he causes all to worship the antichrist or be killed:

<sup>13</sup> It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people,

<sup>14</sup> and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived.

<sup>15</sup> And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.

<sup>16</sup> Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead,

<sup>17</sup> so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.

For a season, Satan is content to be worshiped indirectly through false religions, as long as people do not worship the true God. However, at the midway point of the tribulation period, he will call all to worship him directly, and those who will not will be destroyed, including those who worship him through his world-wide ecumenical church – the prostitute.

## **8. A revived Roman empire consisting of the European nations is a major character in the tribulation period.**

Daniel 9:26-27 (NIV) predicts the nation the antichrist will come from. It says:

<sup>26</sup> After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.

<sup>27</sup> He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put

an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

In describing the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, it says the “**people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.**” Who were the people that destroyed the temple? The Romans. What ruler is the passage talking about? Again, it is describing the antichrist who will make a peace covenant with Israel, as Daniel 9:27 predicts. But how is it possible that this future world ruler will come from the Roman Empire which no longer exists? For this to happen, there must be a revival of Rome as a world power.

What is Rome’s history? After Greece conquered the world, Rome conquered Greece and became the dominant world power for many centuries. However, in the Middle Ages, Rome disintegrated. The Roman Empire, though centralized in Italy, primarily consisted of all the European nations. It will include some type of partnership between European nations.

In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar has a dream of five kingdoms that would rule the earth, concluding with an everlasting kingdom that would never be destroyed. Those kingdoms were Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. The fourth kingdom, Rome, is pictured in Daniel 2:40-43:

<sup>40</sup> **And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these.**

<sup>41</sup> **And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay.**

<sup>42</sup> **And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle.**

<sup>43</sup> **As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay.**

Rome is pictured as iron legs and feet mixed with clay and iron. This appears to refer to different stages of the Roman kingdom – Daniel 2:42.

In the beginning, when Rome was united, it was strong and smashed everyone into pieces. However, later it began to divide and become weaker – only retaining some of the strength of the iron. When Rome conquered Greece and the rest of the world, it was strong like iron. However, eventually, in the Middle Ages, it disintegrated into separate countries throughout Europe. Many believe the second stage of the Roman empire has begun in the forming together of the European nations in the European Union (EU). With that said, the EU does not seem to be the final form of the Roman Empire. Daniel 7:23-27 gives more details:

<sup>23</sup> **“Thus he said: ‘As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces.**

<sup>24</sup> **As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings.**

<sup>25</sup> **He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.**

<sup>26</sup> **But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end.**

<sup>27</sup> **And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; His kingdom shall be an**

everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.’

In Daniel 7, an angel gave Daniel further clarification about the last kingdom: it will have ten kings who form a federation together (see Revelation 13:1). After them, another king will rise up, whom we know as the antichrist. He will subdue three of the kings, leaving only seven in the federation (see Revelation 17:3). It then describes some of the exploits of the antichrist. He will persecute the saints, probably in the context referring to Jews (but certainly including Christians, Revelation 12-13). Then his power will be taken away and destroyed forever, as the final kingdom will begin to rule on the earth when Christ returns. It will be an everlasting kingdom which Christ and His saints – the people of God – will rule over. One of the reasons the revived Roman Empire is so significant is because its formation tells us that Christ’s coming and eternal kingdom is near. It seems that the EU may in some form be embryonic of the final ten-king federation, which eventually becomes a seven-king federation. Revelation 17:3 probably pictures this when it refers to a scarlet beast (the antichrist) who has “seven heads and ten horns.” The seven heads probably represent the seven kings and the horns represent the 10 kingdoms, which the antichrist will oversee.

And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.

### 9. A world capital called Babylon is a major character in the tribulation period. Revelation 18:2-3:

<sup>2</sup> And he called out with a mighty voice, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.

<sup>3</sup> For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.”

This city will be famous. From it, Satan will influence the nations. It will be a city full of demons, sexual immorality, witchcraft, wealth, commerce, and even human trafficking (see Revelation 18:9, 11-13, 23). It will be used to persecute believers. Revelation 18:24 says:

And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth.

Eventually, it will be destroyed by God. Revelation 18:8:

For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.

The city will be the capital of Satan’s empire during the tribulation. Though some believe that the name “*Babylon*” is symbolic of whatever evil city Satan will use during the tribulation period, others believe it will be literal Babylon. This is because there are a few Old Testament prophecies which declare that God will destroy ancient Babylon in such a way that it will never be inhabited again (see Isaiah 13:17-22, Jeremiah 50:39-40), which has never been fulfilled. Isaiah 13:17-22 says this about Babylon:

<sup>17</sup> Behold, I am stirring up the Medes against them, who have no regard for silver and do not delight in gold.

<sup>18</sup> Their bows will slaughter the young men; they will have no mercy on the fruit of the womb; their eyes will not pity children.

<sup>19</sup> And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them.

<sup>20</sup> It will never be inhabited or lived in for all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there;

no shepherds will make their flocks lie down there.

<sup>21</sup> But wild animals will lie down there, and their houses will be full of howling creatures; there ostriches will dwell, and there wild goats will dance.

<sup>22</sup> Hyenas will cry in its towers, and jackals in the pleasant palaces; its time is close at hand and its days will not be prolonged.

Certainly, the Medes and Persians defeated Babylon during the time of Daniel, but Babylon continued to be inhabited after, and it is still inhabited today. Therefore, many see that prophecy as having a near and far fulfillment. Satan's capital city of Babylon in the last days will fulfill that prophecy. Revelation 18:21-23:

<sup>21</sup> Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more;

<sup>22</sup> and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you no more, and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you no more, and the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more,

<sup>23</sup> and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more, for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.

## **10. Christ is a major character in the tribulation period.**

The entire tribulation period is considered part of the Lamb's wrath, as He is the One who opens each seal in the seven-sealed book (see Revelation 6). Revelation 6:15-17:

<sup>15</sup> Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains,

<sup>16</sup> calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,

<sup>17</sup> for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

At the end of the tribulation in Revelation 19:6-8, Christ is married to His bride in heaven, who represents the church (Ephesians 5:22-33). Then, He returns to the earth with His army to judge Satan, the antichrist, the false prophet, and the unbelieving world, and to establish His Millennial Kingdom. Revelation 19:11-16:

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The One sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

<sup>12</sup> His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems, and He has a Name written that no one knows but Himself.

<sup>13</sup> He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the Name by which He is called is The Word of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following Him on white horses.

<sup>15</sup> From His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

<sup>16</sup> On His robe and on His thigh He has a Name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

## **CHRONOLOGY OF THE TRIBULATION**

What are some of the major chronological events in the tribulation?

**1. At the beginning of the tribulation period, the antichrist will bring a period of false peace.**

With the opening of the first seal of the seven-sealed book, the antichrist is revealed. Revelation 6:1-2:

<sup>1</sup> Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!"

<sup>2</sup> And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.

Most believe this person is the antichrist. The fact that he is on a white horse with a crown seems to represent his political leadership. The fact that he has a bow, with no arrows, seems to represent that he will initially conquer but without war. He will be a political genius who will initially win the hearts of people by his words and by bringing a false peace. Daniel 9:27 affirms this by the fact that he will create a seven-year peace treaty with Israel.

And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.

**2. The antichrist will have a false resurrection which helps deceive the world into following him.** Revelation 13:3-4:

<sup>3</sup> One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast.

<sup>4</sup> And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

Since Satan is an imitator, he imitates God through his unholy trinity – himself representing God, the antichrist representing Christ, and the false prophet representing the Holy Spirit. The antichrist will imitate Christ by having a false resurrection (see Revelation 13:14), which will be used to deceive the world into following him and worshipping Satan.

**3. At the midpoint of the seven-year tribulation period, the antichrist will break his covenant with Israel, and command all to worship him or suffer death.**

Several verses speak of this prideful act of rebellion against God. Daniel 9:27 (see above); 11:36:

And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done.

In Matthew 24, Jesus described this as a pivotal event during the tribulation and that, when the Jews saw this, they should flee Jerusalem since it would mark the beginning of the severest suffering that will ever happen in the world and specifically a devastating persecution of the Jews. He described this part of the tribulation as having "*great suffering*". Matthew 24:15-22:

<sup>15</sup> So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

<sup>16</sup> then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

- <sup>17</sup> Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house,  
<sup>18</sup> and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.  
<sup>19</sup> And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!  
<sup>20</sup> Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.  
<sup>21</sup> 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.  
<sup>22</sup> And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, Paul also warned of what would happen. (See page 13 for the Scripture.)

Also, John spoke of this treacherous act in Revelation 13:13-17 and how it would lead to the murder of those who would not worship the antichrist and accept his mark.

- <sup>13</sup> It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people,  
<sup>14</sup> and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived.  
<sup>15</sup> And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.  
<sup>16</sup> Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave,<sup>[a]</sup> to be marked on the right hand or the forehead,  
<sup>17</sup> so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.

This will apparently be when the antichrist destroys the ecumenical church, he once partnered with to gain power. Only worshiping him directly will suffice. Revelation 17:3,16-17:

- <sup>3</sup> And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.  
<sup>16</sup> And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire,  
<sup>17</sup> for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the Words of God are fulfilled.

**4. After breaking his covenant with Israel and commanding all to worship him, the antichrist will aim to conquer the world by war instead of intrigue and promises of peace. Daniel 11:37-45:**

- <sup>37</sup> He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all.  
<sup>38</sup> He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these. A god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts.  
<sup>39</sup> He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price.  
<sup>40</sup> "At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him, but the king of the north shall

rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through.

<sup>41</sup> He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites.

<sup>42</sup> He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape.

<sup>43</sup> He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train.

<sup>44</sup> But news from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction.

<sup>45</sup> And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.

**5. To conclude his conquest, the antichrist will call the nations of the earth to a place called Armageddon (in northern Israel) to fight against God and Israel. Revelation 16:13-14, 16:**

<sup>13</sup> And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs.

<sup>14</sup> For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.

<sup>16</sup> And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

Likewise, Zechariah prophesied about this; however, he said God gathered the nations of the earth to fight against Jerusalem. Zechariah 12:2-3; 14:1-2:

<sup>12:2</sup> "Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah.

<sup>3</sup> On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it.

<sup>14:1</sup> Behold, a day is coming for the LORD, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst.

<sup>2</sup> For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

**6. Christ will return with His bride to defeat the antichrist, judge the unbelieving, save the nation of Israel, bind Satan, and begin His millennial reign on the earth. Revelation 19:19-20:3:**

<sup>19</sup> And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.

<sup>20</sup> And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

<sup>21</sup> And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of Him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

<sup>2:1</sup> Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain.

<sup>2</sup> And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him

for a thousand years,

<sup>3</sup> and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

Zechariah 12:3-4, 8-10; 14:3-4, 12-16 says:

<sup>12:3</sup> On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it.

<sup>4</sup> On that day, declares the LORD, I will strike every horse with panic, and its rider with madness. But for the sake of the house of Judah I will keep my eyes open, when I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.

<sup>8</sup> On that day the LORD will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, going before them.

<sup>9</sup> And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup> And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on Me, on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

<sup>14:3</sup> Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when He fights on a day of battle.

<sup>4</sup> On that day His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward.

<sup>12</sup> And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.

<sup>13</sup> And on that day a great panic from the LORD shall fall on them, so that each will seize the hand of another, and the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other.

<sup>14</sup> Even Judah will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be collected, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance.

<sup>15</sup> And a plague like this plague shall fall on the horses, the mules, the camels, the donkeys, and whatever beasts may be in those camps.

<sup>16</sup> Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.

## CONCLUSION

Christ prophesied that the tribulation would happen right before His visible second coming in Matthew 24:29-30. It will last seven years. It will be a time where God judges the unbelieving world (see 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12, Revelation 3:10) and saves a people who will worship Him during Christ's Millennial Kingdom (see Zechariah 14:16, Matthew 25:34), including the nation of Israel (see Zechariah 13:8-9, 12:10, Jeremiah 30:7, Romans 11:26-27).