

Major Bible Themes

52 Vital Doctrines of the Scriptures Simplified and Explained

Adapted from the book *Major Bible Themes*
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The Tribulation

- Introduction
 - Much confusion has arisen in the doctrine of the Tribulation because of the failure to distinguish between the general tribulation and suffering of the people of God and the specific period of the Tribulation described in the O.T. and N.T.
 - The concept of tribulation implies a time of pressure, affliction, anguish of heart, and trouble in general.
 - A situation of tribulation is, accordingly, a common experience of the human race resulting from its sin and rebellion against God and from the ongoing angelic conflict between God and Satan in the world.
 - According to Job 5:7, “For man is born for trouble, as the sparks fly upward.”
 - Christ assured His disciples in John 16:33, “In the world you have tribulation.”
 - The trials of Job and the problems of Paul with his thorn in the flesh are symptomatic of the human race bearing many types of affliction.
 - These have characterized the human race since the fall of Adam and will continue to some extent for the duration of human history on this Earth.
 - These tribulations are greatly alleviated during the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, but are not eliminated until God Himself establishes the New Heavens and New Earth, in which righteousness dwells (2 Pet 3:13).
 - In contrast with these general intimations of trial and trouble as they afflict the human race, Scripture speaks of a special time of trouble at the end of the age (known as the Tribulation) which will precede the second coming of Christ.
 - The second half of this seven year period involves intensified tribulation and is known as the Great Tribulation.
- The Old Testament Doctrine of the Tribulation
 - In Deut 4:30 Israel was told of a time when they would face distress and return to the Lord in the latter days.
 - In Jer 30:1-10 this time is known as Jacob’s distress.
 - ✦ This period will include a regathering of Israel to possess the promised land (v. 3).
 - ✦ This will be a time of trouble like none before or after, but Israel will endure (v. 7).
 - ✦ Once the period has run its course, the yoke of bondage for Israel will be broken so that they will no longer live in fear serving Gentile rulers, but instead they will live in peace and rest as they serve the Lord their God and David who has been raised (vv. 8-10).

- This time of Jacob's distress encompasses the entire seven years of Daniel's seventieth week (Dan 9:27), but reaches a heightened level of testing after the midpoint when Antichrist undertakes the abomination of desolation (Dan 12:11).
- This period comes to an end when Christ returns to establish His kingdom wherein all nations of the Earth will serve Him (Dan 7:13-14).
- The Tribulational saints will suffer under the hand of Antichrist for the final 3 ½ years of the Tribulation and then his dominion is taken away and he is destroyed (Dan 7:25-26).
- The New Testament Doctrine of the Tribulation
 - The O.T. doctrine of the Tribulation is relatively complete, but to this N.T. revelation can be added.
 - When asked about His return and the end of the age, Christ first describes things that will occur throughout the period between His ascension and His return (Matt 24:3-8).
 - He follows that up by describing the period of Tribulation which will come after these things (Matt 24:9-14).
 - He then gives details of the Great Tribulation, the final 3 ½ years of the Tribulation which follow the abomination of desolation (Matt 24:15-29).
 - While the entire seven years of the Tribulation involve wrath and persecution, the final 3 ½ years are so intense that Christ must cut that time short to preserve the elect (Matt 24:21-22).
 - Jesus warns His disciples not to believe those who would mislead them about His return occurring, because while the Rapture of the Church will be seen by believers only, the second coming of Christ will be seen by everyone on the Earth (Matt 24:23-27, 29-30).
 - At the end of the period of Great Tribulation, angels will gather all believers from everywhere on the Earth (Matt 24:31).
 - The Tribulation is described in great detail in Revelation chapters 6 - 18.
 - ✦ Christ Himself is given to break seven seals which unleash the wrath of God on Earth (Rev 5:1-5).
 - ✦ As He breaks the first six seals, there is war, famine, death, martyrdom, and terror (Rev 6:1-17).
 - ✦ The seventh seal is seven trumpets of judgment (Rev 8:1-2).
 - ✦ These trumpets result in damage to the Earth and its environment (Rev 8:7-12) as well as torment and loss of life (Rev 9:1-15).
 - ✦ The seventh trumpet is seven bowls of wrath (Rev 11:15; 16:1).
 - ✦ These bowls prepare the way for the return of Christ (Rev 16:2-21).
 - When Christ returns, armies will be gathered for the great battle at Armageddon (Rev 16:14; 19:14) and the Earth will be in chaos and destruction as a result of the breaking of the seven seals by Christ Himself.
 - Contrast this truth of Scripture with the false dream of some theologians that the world will get better and better, gradually being subdued by the gospel until it has been brought into obedience to Christ, making it ready for His return.

- Human effort does not usher in the kingdom – Christ Himself comes with sword to judge the rebellious (Rev 19:15).
- The Church is never mentioned as part of the events of the Tribulation because it is saved from this wrath (1 Thess 2:10).
- The saints and elect that are mentioned in passages regarding the Tribulation are saved Jews and Gentiles, many of whom are subject to martyrdom.
- The Tribulation is a necessary part of God’s plan because it serves as punishment of the wicked nations and leads to the repentance of Israel as well as many Gentiles.
- The period of Great Tribulation is so dark that it provides a sharp contrast to the glory of the kingdom which follows.