

# Valley Bible Church – Adult Class

## Living in Light of His Return: The Tribulation, Parts I & II Adult SS ~ June 28 & July 5, 2015

### Introduction:

The exact day I last taught this message was a Saturday night at ROCK group and the date was May 21, 2011. That day supposedly marked the day of the Rapture of the Church according to Harold Camping and his followers.

In the Miami Herald, a news report on Harold Camping came out Friday May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011: "If you believe a fringe Christian radio group, then you've got a little more than 24 hours to either party it up, or repent for your sins. Because according to the 'Family Radio' network, 6 p.m. Saturday will be when the 'rapture' begins and the end of days begins.

There have been billboards and bus stop benches across the Sunshine State for months proclaiming the rapture is near. They say, 'Save the Date. We Can Know.' Or, 'Noah Knew. We Can Know.' The Family Radio network's founder, 89-year-old Harold Camping, said Saturday, May 21, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. will be when the rapture of the church takes place."

The very foundation of this hypothesis is built upon faulty hermeneutics. The Scriptures are clear: "No one knows." But that billboard doesn't attract attention now does it? Jesus could not have spoken more clearly to the very subject in **Mark 13:32**, "Concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Additionally, "the day of the Lord will come like a thief" (**2 Pet 3:10**). "The Day of the Lord" is in reference not only to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ but the Tribulation Period leading up to it.

Sadly, these apocalyptic predictions have been errantly held time and time again. To name a couple: Nostradamus (French astrologer in the 1600's), William Miller (first held to the year 1843, but the Millerites changed their Last Day prediction a number of times receiving the label of "the Great Disappointment"), and several other false prophets.

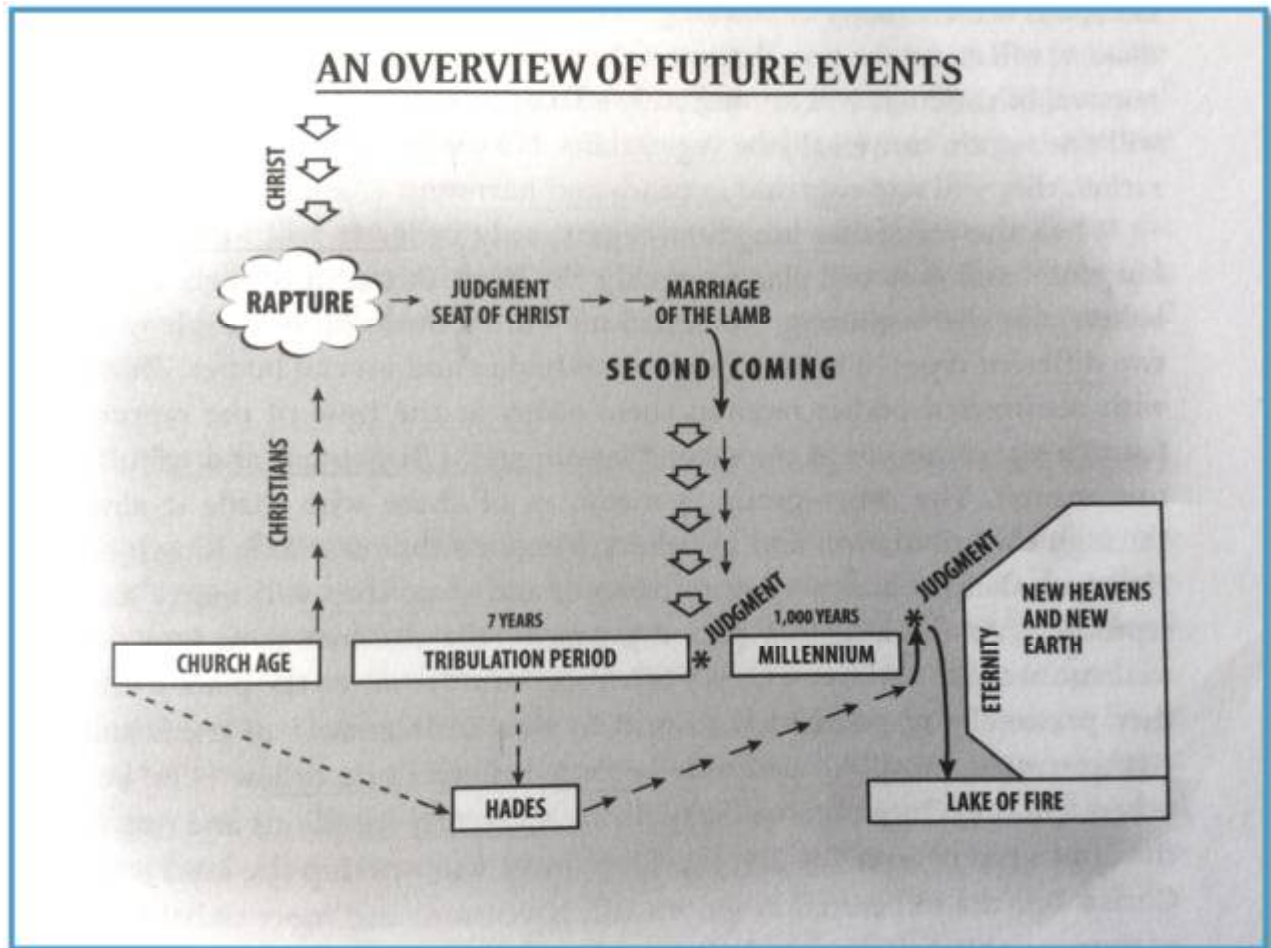
### *Why do you think there is such a fascination with how and when the world will end?*

My hope and prayer for us today is that we would not be deceived but that we would be disciplined to study what the Scriptures actually teach. And as we unfold the Words of God together, may we stand in awe at our great God's plan of redemption for all creation. May we point this watching world towards the glory of our Savior who comes with reward and wrath in His hand.

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## Overview of Eschatology:

Before we take on our two-week study on the Tribulation Period, let's try to keep the big picture.



Let's take a quick peak at these 6 main aspects of the Tribulation before we start!

1. The Biblical terminology of the Tribulation
2. The Key Texts of the Tribulation
3. The Divine Intentions of the Tribulation
4. The Key Events of the Tribulation
5. The Key Characters of the Tribulation
6. The Church's Relationship to the Tribulation

## Outline:

### I. The *Biblical Terminology* of the Tribulation

#### a. The "Tribulation"

- i. "A period of seven years, beginning shortly after the rapture, when judgment is meted [*measured*] out upon the world at large for its sinfulness of past ages, and when the nation Israel is brought,

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through tremendous suffering, to a receptive attitude toward Christ as its Messiah-Deliverer.” –Leon J. Wood, *The Bible and Future Events*

- ii. “The final seven-year period of time (described in Scriptures such as **Revelation 6–19**) when God will pour out judgment on unbelieving Gentiles and disobedient Israel.” –Paul Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*
- iii. **Matthew 24:9** says, “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake.”
- iv. Not every word “tribulation” in Scripture is referring to the 7-year Tribulation Period of the end times. Context will indicate which are and which are not speaking of the end times. For instance:
  1. **Matthew 13:21** speaks of a more general “tribulation,” likened to persecution, which arises on account of the word sown on the soil of human hearts.
  2. **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.” This “tribulation” is a common trouble that befalls all in this world.
  3. **Romans 12:12** “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”

## b. The “Great Tribulation”

- i. The “Great Tribulation” is understood theologically to be referring to the last half of the Tribulation Period—the second 3½ years. Like birth pains, the pains of the Tribulation Period will grow in their intensity and frequency.
- ii. **Matthew 24:21** says, “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.”
- iii. **Revelation 7:14** says, “I said to him, ‘My lord, you know.’ And he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of *the great tribulation*, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’”

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## c. The “Day of the Lord”

- i. “The prophecies about the Day of the Lord will be fulfilled when God enters into human history to: (1) judge the nations and discipline Israel, (2) establish the Millennial Kingdom, and (3) eventually remake the heavens and the earth.” –Michael Vlach, Professor of Theology at The Master’s Seminary
- ii. **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. **8** And it shall come to pass in that day, declares the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and I will burst your bonds, and foreigners shall no more make a servant of him. **9** But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.”
- iii. Usually in Scripture, the future “Day of the Lord” refers to the Tribulation (see **2 Pet 3:10; Isa 4:2; 19:23-25; 34:8ff; 35:1–6**). Again, not every reference to the words “Day of the Lord” are in reference to the same eschatological event; context will disclose which ones are and which are not.
- iv. *Broadly speaking*, the “Day of the Lord” refers to the entire Tribulation Period, Second Coming, and establishment of the Kingdom of God as one eschatological period. But in a *narrower* sense, the “Day of the Lord” refers to the Second Coming of Christ and the judgments associated with His return to earth.
- v. The Day of the Lord will come “like a thief in the night” (**1 Thess 5:2–3**). The Scriptures don’t reveal the time in order that we can always be ready and watchful.

## d. The “Time of Jacob’s Trouble”

- i. Jeremiah speaks of a time of unparalleled trouble for Israel (**Jer 30:7, 8**). This unparalleled trouble for Israel/Jacob parallels other passages describing the “Day of the Lord,” therefore it is logical to conclude that it is also referring to the Tribulation. There can’t be two greatest times of trouble with which there is “none like it” (**Jer 30:7**).

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## e. The “Wrath of God”

- i. The “Wrath of God” is a common designation for the Tribulation Period. This phrase denotes “God’s passionate feeling against sin, which will lead to its inevitable punishment.” (Benware)
- ii. **1 Thessalonians 1:10** says, “And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from *the wrath to come.*”
- iii. **Revelation 6:16** says, “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?’”
- iv. Man’s wrath is bad, Satan’s is worse, but nothing will compare to God’s wrath! The whole period of the Tribulation is characterized by the outpouring of God’s wrath on sinful man.

## f. “Daniel’s Seventieth Week”

- i. According to the Moody Handbook of Theology: “The tribulation is the seventieth week of Daniel (**Dan 9:27**), a week according to the prophet’s terminology equaling seven years. It is the last of a seventy-week (490 years) prophecy regarding Israel’s future (**Dan 9:24–27**), which began in 444 B.C. Sixty-nine weeks (483 years) concluded with the death of Christ (**Dan 9:26**). There is a gap between the sixty-ninth week (A.D. 33) and the seventieth week (the future Tribulation Period). As the seventieth week of Daniel, the tribulation has particular reference to Israel (not the church), because Daniel was told, ‘Seventy weeks have been decreed for *your people*’ (**Dan 9:24**).”
- ii. The rapture of the church does not necessarily begin the Tribulation Period on earth. The key event that starts the seven years of the Tribulation is the signing of a covenant by the Beast, who promises to protect Israel (**Dan 9:27**). This could leave a brief period of time between the rapture of the church and the beginning of the Tribulation.

## g. Other Old Testament references to the Tribulation include:

“Jehovah’s Strange Work” (**Isa 28:21**), “Jehovah’s Strange Act” (**Isa 28:21**), “The Day of Israel’s Calamity” (**Deut 32:35; Obad 12–14**), “The Indignation” (**Isa 26:20; Dan 11:36**), “The Overflowing Scourge” (**Isa 28:15, 18**), “The Day of Vengeance” (**Isa 34:8; 35:4; 61:2**), “The Year of Recompense” (**Isa 34:8**), “The Time of Trouble” (**Dan 12:1; Zeph 1:15**), “The Day of Wrath” (**Zeph 1:15**), “The Day of Distress” (**Zeph 1:15**), “The

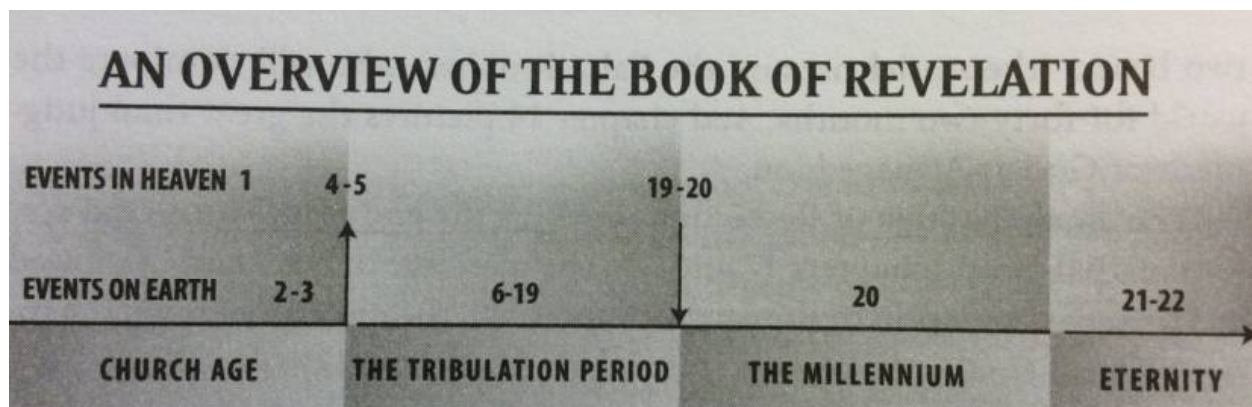
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Day of Wasteness" (**Zeph 1:15**), "The Day of Desolation" (**Zeph 1:15**), "The Day of Darkness" (**Zeph 1:15; Amos 5:18, 20; Joel 2:2**), "The Day of Gloominess" (**Zeph 1:15; Joel 2:2**), "The Day of Clouds" (**Zeph 1:15; Joel 2:2**), "The Day of Thick Darkness" (**Zeph 1:15; Joel 2:2**), "The Day of the Trumpet" (**Zeph 1:16**), and "The Day of Alarm" (**Zeph 1:16**).

- h. Other New Testament references to the Tribulation include:**  
"The Hour of Trial" (**Rev 3:10**), "The Great Day of the Wrath of the Lamb of God" (**Rev 6:16–17**), "The Wrath to Come" (**1 Thess 1:10**), "The Wrath" (**1 Thess 5:9; Rev 11:18**), and "The Hour of Judgment" (**Rev 14:7**).
- i. *Why do you think the Scriptures speak so much about this particular time of trouble?***

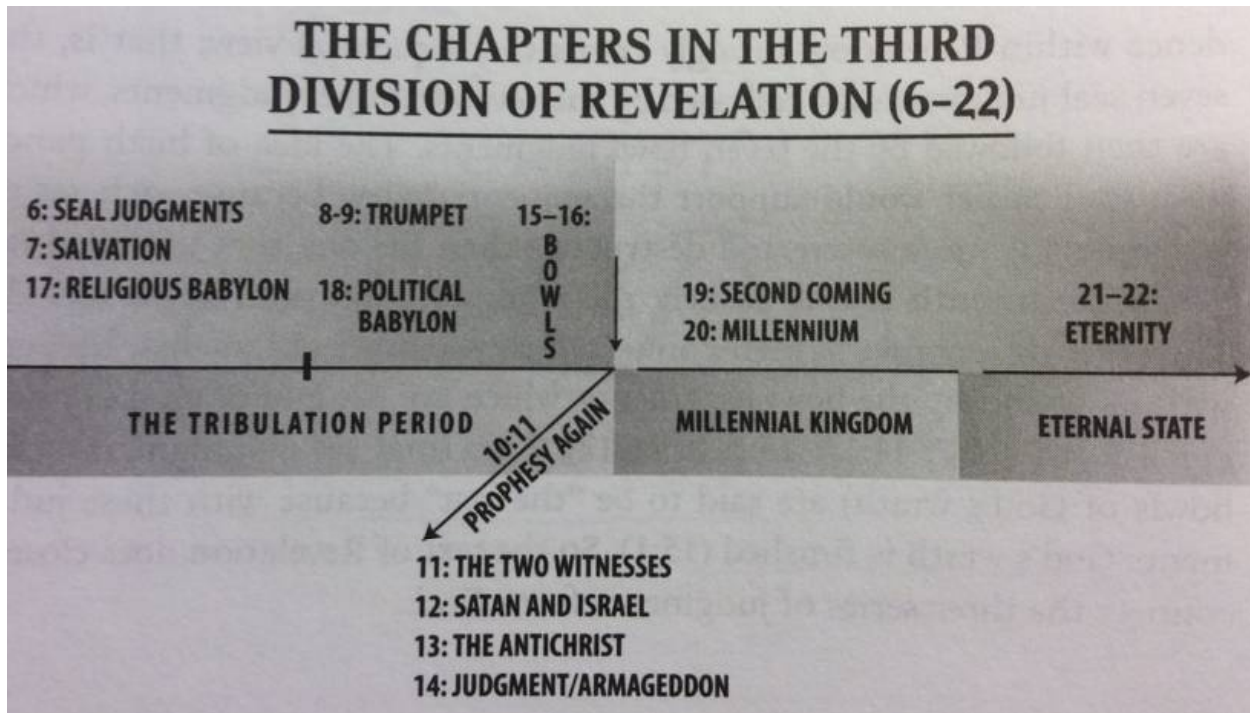
## II. The Key Texts of the Tribulation

- a. Christ's Olivet Discourse (Matt 24, 25; Mk 13; Lk 21)**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. Daniel's Prophetic Vision (Daniel 9:24–27)**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. John's Prophetic Vision (Rev 6–19)**





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\*Both charts are taken from Benware's *Understanding End Times Prophecy*.

### III. The *Divine Intentions* of the Tribulation

#### a. Purpose #1: Judgment for an unbelieving world

1. **Revelation 3:10** refers to the Tribulation Period as "the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth." The first major purpose of the Tribulation, then, is to test the unbelieving world. "Those who dwell upon the earth" refers to those who are unbelievers on earth during the period described in **Revelation 4-19**. (Thomas Edgar, "An Exegesis of Rapture Passages," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, p. 216)
2. As the three series of judgments (seals, trumpets, and bowls) are being poured out on the earth during the period of the Tribulation, every creature will be held responsible to the Creator for resisting Him and breaking His laws.
3. God will deal violently yet justly with all the pagan nations during this time. He will prove that though "the nations rage and the peoples plot" against Him, their rebellion is "in vain" (**Psalms 2:1**). "The rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against his

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anointed" (2:2) but "He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision [mockery]" (2:4).

4. Paul Benware adds, "These judgments are another step in dealing with sin in preparation for the Messiah's reign of righteousness on earth. But it is clear that God could judge sinners completely in a matter of moments and does not need seven years. This suggests that judgment, though important in the plan of God, is not the main reason for the seven-year period of tribulation."

## B. Purpose #2: Preparation of Israel

1. "The Bible teaches that the Tribulation is a time of preparation for Israel's restoration and conversion (**Deut 4:29, 30; Jer 30:3-11; Zech 12:10**)." (Ice and Demy, p. 36)
2. **Ezekiel 20:37** says, "I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant."
3. **Daniel 12:1** says, "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. "One goal of the tribulation is 'to break the power or the will of the Jewish nation.' The tribulation will continue and will not end until this happens. 'God intends to break the will of the holy people in order to bring about a national regeneration'" (Benware quoting Fruchtenbaum, 298).
5. **Zechariah 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.'"
6. A great number of Jews will be saved in the Tribulation. They will flee into the wilderness (**Rev 12:6, 13-14**). Final salvation will come to the Jews at the end of the Tribulation Period (**Zech 12:10ff**). This will only be 1/3 of the Jews according to **Zech 13:8-9** above.



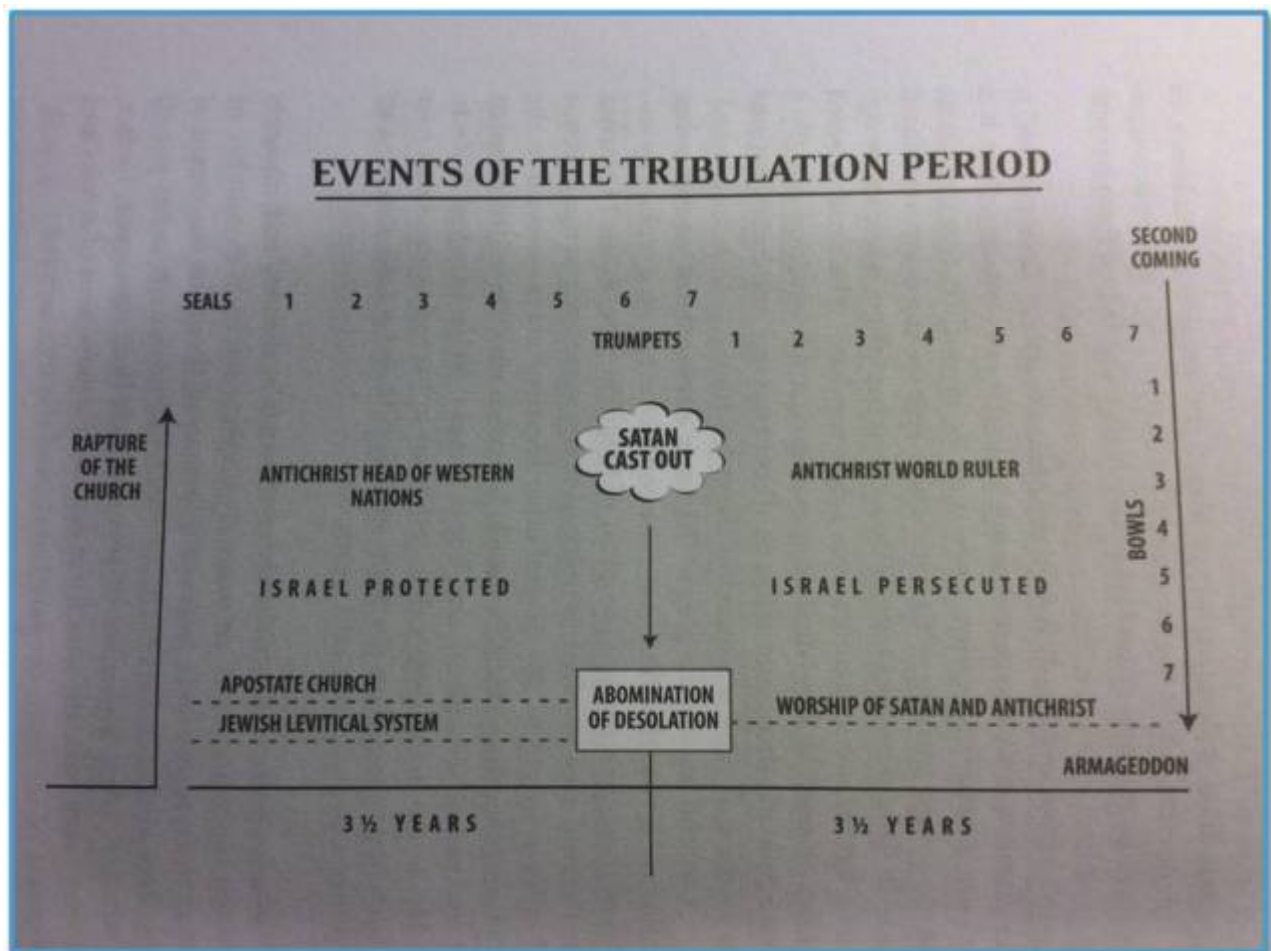
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7. **Romans 11:26** says, "And so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, 'The deliverer will come from Zion, he will remove ungodliness from Jacob.'" So all Israel, that will inherit the Kingdom, will be saved.

## C. Purpose #3: Salvation of an unnumbered amount of Gentiles

1. This purpose is more of a bi-product or an effect of God's intentions in the Tribulation. This unnumbered amount of Gentiles is referred to as "martyrs" (**Rev 6:9; 7:9–10**) because believing in Christ during this time will be very costly.
2. Either the two witnesses, the 144,000, the angels (**Rev 14:6, 7**), or the appearance of Christ at the end of the tribulation will be used to bring about the salvation of these Gentiles.

## IV. The Key Events of the Tribulation



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## V. The *Key Characters* of the Tribulation

- a. The “Antichrist” (1 Jn 2:18) who is also called the “Man of lawlessness” (2 Thess 2:3–4), “the Beast” (Rev 13, 17), and “the little horn” (Dan 7:8)
- b. The “False Prophet” (Rev 13:11–18; 16:13; 19:20; 20:10)
- c. The 144,000 (Rev 7:1–8; 14:1–5)
- d. The Two Witnesses (Rev 11:3–13)

## VI. The *Church’s Relationship* to the Tribulation

- a. The Moody Handbook of Theology states: “The nature and purpose of the tribulation is important in resolving the issue of the church’s participation in it...It has already been shown that the tribulation is a time of the outpouring of the wrath of God (1 Thess 1:10; Rev 6:16, 17; 11:18; 14:19; 15:1; 16:1, 19); it is a time of punishment (Isa 24:20–21); a time of trouble (Jer 30:7; Dan 12:1); a time of great destruction (Joel 1:15; 1 Thess 5:3); a time of desolation (Zeph 1:14, 15); a time of judgment (Rev. 14:7; 16:5; 19:2). If the church is the object of Christ’s love, how can it be present during the tribulation?”
- b. God made a special promise to the church that it would be delivered from the future, tribulational wrath of God. A few verses make this point abundantly clear:
  - i. **1 Thessalonians 1:9-10** The Thessalonians “*were wait[ing] for His Son from heaven. . . that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.*” This wrath refers to the future Tribulation Period.
  - ii. **1 Thessalonians 5:9** “*For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” This wrath refers to the Tribulation because the immediate context is the wrath of the Day of the Lord (5:1–8).

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- iii. **Revelation 3:10** "*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 upon the earth.*" Michael Vlach comments, "Here is a promise to the Church of preservation outside of the time of Tribulation. Thus, believers are not only promised deliverance from divine wrath but from the *time period* ("hour") of divine wrath. This rules out the possibility of the Church being on earth during the Tribulation."
- iv. **Revelation 4–18** There is no mention of the Church in these chapters on the Tribulation Period.
  - 1. Vlach notes, "**Revelation 4–18** gives the most detailed account of the seven-year Tribulation Period. If the Church were to be in the Tribulation Period, surely one would expect at least one reference to the Church in this time period. The Church, however, which is referred to nineteen times in the first three chapters of Revelation, is suddenly silent and never referred to in chapters 4–18."
  - 2. "It is remarkable and totally unexpected that John would shift from detailed instructions for the Church to absolute silence about the Church for the subsequent 15 chapters if, in fact, the Church continued into the tribulation.'" (Richard L. Mayhue, *Snatched Before the Storm*, p. 8)
- c. Dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists (Covenant Theologians) come to different conclusions than one another regarding God's purpose and plan in biblical history.
  - i. Dispensationalists tend to approach the Scriptures with a more *literal* interpretation seeing several distinctions between the church and Israel, while non-dispensationalists come at the Scriptures *allegorically*, spiritualizing the prophecies of Scripture that refer to the church and the nation of Israel. This allegorical approach leads non-dispensationalists to conclude that Israel and the church are one in the same entity.
  - ii. Covenant Theology focuses on the *unity* of God's plan for history and His people where Israel and the church are outworkings of the one covenant of grace. Dispensationalists understand that there are *distinctions* within God's program of history (pre-Fall, Law of Moses, establishment of the church, etc).

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- iii. However, the Scriptures do not seem to maintain a radical discontinuity between the church and Israel, dividing them too sharply. Dispensationalists over the years have come to embrace one unified plan of history that includes important distinctions between Israel and the church. This unifying theme of the Scriptures is the one eternal plan of God—the establishment of God’s kingdom on the earth, where the church and Israel have important roles and functions to play under the lordship of Jesus Christ.
- d. Replacement Theology, embraced by non-dispensationalists, can be rejected for seven reasons (according to Michael Vlach in *Has the Church Replaced Israel?*):
  - i. The Bible explicitly teaches the restoration of the nation of Israel.
  - ii. The Bible explicitly promises the perpetuity of the nation of Israel.
  - iii. The NT reaffirms a future restoration for the nation of Israel.
  - iv. The NT reaffirms that the OT promises and covenants to Israel are still the possession of Israel.
  - v. New Testament prophecy affirms a future for Israel.
  - vi. The NT maintains a distinction between Israel and the church.
  - vii. The doctrine of election is proof that God has a future for Israel.

## Conclusion:

### 1. Remember God’s Sovereignty

- a. “Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales” (**Isa 40:15**).
- b. “It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in” (**40:22**).
- c. “Scarcely are they [princes and rulers of the earth] planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble” (**40:24**).
- d. “Then he will speak to them [nations, peoples, kings, and rulers of the earth] in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ‘As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.’ Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth” (**Ps 2:5, 6, 10**).

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- e. "For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps. He it was who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and of beast; who struck down many nations and killed mighty kings. For the Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants" (**Ps 135:5, 6, 8, 10, 14**).
- f. "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns" (**Rev 19:6b**).

## 2. Rejoice in our Future Hope

- a. "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (**Rev 5:12**)!
- b. "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just" (**19:1, 2**).
- c. "Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (**Ti 2:13**).
- d. "And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (**Rom 8:23**).
- e. "When Christ who is your life appears, then you will also appear with him in glory" (**Col 3:4**).
- f. "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (**Phil 3:20**).
- g. The Lord, in His mercy, has kept us from the wrath of God (**Rev 3:10; 1 Thess 5:9**); how can anything but Spirit-born joy be present in us?

## 3. Resolve to Serve the Lord

- a. "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (**1 Cor 15:58**).
- b. "Or we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil" (**2 Cor 5:10**).
- c. "Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest" (**Jn 4:35**).