

THE TRIBULATION

This *End Times* note is largely based on the book *The Bible & Future Events* by Leon J. Wood (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1973). The sequence of last-day events as set out here is from a pretribulational, premillennial point of view.

DEFINITION:

The great tribulation is a period of seven years, beginning shortly after the rapture, when judgment is meted out upon the world at large for its sinfulness. At this time the nation of Israel is tried by the fire of suffering to bring the Jews to a receptive attitude toward Christ as their Messiah-Deliverer. The last half of this period is more severe in the degree of suffering experienced, and Christ designated this three-and-a-half year period "great tribulation".

A BRIEF EXPLANATION:

The period called the tribulation ("great tribulation" Matt. 24:21) will ensue shortly after the rapture, though some time may elapse between to allow for certain necessary developments. These developments would include, for example, the restoration of the Roman confederacy and the appearance of the Antichrist as the confederacy's ruler (2 Thess. 2:3).

The period will last seven years, as shown by its identification with Daniel's seventieth week (Dan. 9:27). During this time a series of catastrophic punishments will be brought on the world, symbolised by broken seals (Rev 6:1-17), blown trumpets (Rev 8:1-9:21; 11:15-19), and poured out "vials of the wrath of God" (Rev 16:1-21). These punishments, which will work enormous havoc, will be meant especially for the Gentile world as retribution for its continued rejection of God and His will.

The Jews of Israel will likely be spared in large part from these punishments (Isa 26:20,21), but they will experience severe oppression at the hand of the Antichrist during the last half of the period, an oppression called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7).

The Antichrist will make a covenant with them (Dan. 9:27) at the beginning of the seven-year period, promising a period of rest and peace, but at the midpoint he will break this covenant as he orders sacrifices and offerings to cease at the temple (restored by this time). He will then become as much their enemy as before he was their friend. He will conquer all their land, including the city of Jerusalem (Zech. 14:2) and will even be able to establish a residence there (Dan. 11:45). The horror he brings will result in the destruction of no less than two-thirds of the Jewish populace (Zech 13:8, 9). This suffering is permitted by God as a means of refining the Jews, "as silver is refined, and . . . as gold is tried" (Zech 13:9), so they will be made ready to receive Christ as their Messiah and King when He comes to deliver them from the Antichrist (Zech 14:3, 4; Rev. 19:11-21)