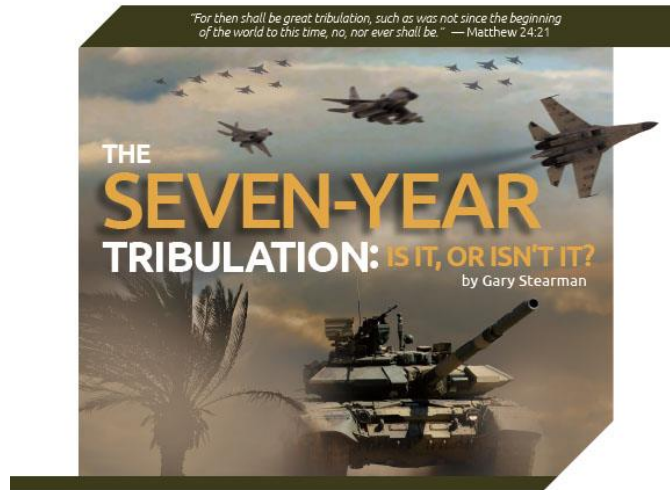


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The Seven-Year Tribulation: Is It, or Isn't It?

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There is an important ongoing discussion in prophetic circles today. It is preoccupied with the length of the period named by Jesus, Himself, in Matthew 24:21 as the “great tribulation.”

Does the Tribulation have a seven-year duration, or does it last only three and a half years? It is often argued that the numerous references in Daniel and Revelation, to “a time, times and a half,” “a thousand, two hundred and sixty days,” “forty-two months,” will only support a three-and-a-half-year Tribulation. These, they say, constitute proof that this period is only half of the traditionally-reckoned seven years.

For several reasons, we still hold to the traditional teaching that the actual Tribulation is a full seven years in length.

Furthermore, reliable expositors agree that it must be preceded by a transitional period that follows the catching-away of the church. This time could be as long as three years, bringing the world a ten-year period of spiritual debauchery and mental agitation, followed by unprecedented physical catastrophe.

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A study of the pertinent Scriptures show that to allow for the full development of prophesied Tribulational events, a certain amount of time must elapse – certainly more than three or four years.

This is true of the period prior to the Tribulation, as well as the Antichrist's revelation and rise to power. After the removal of the Church and God's Holy Spirit from His current position of influence, these key elements can begin to fall into place.

Then, and only then, certain factors will precipitate the final disposition of the prophesied global government and its key players – number one being the Antichrist, himself.

WHY MUST THERE BE A TRIBULATION?

An oft-repeated truism is that the Tribulation is to be distinguished from tribulation, in general.

In the book of Job, we find a man suffering such tribulation, accompanied by his friends. Together, they wrestle with the solution to his problem. Eliphaz, one of Job's counselors, says, *"Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward"* (Job 5:7). In this haunting image, he paints man as a foolish being whose very nature is to walk into trouble. In a real sense, this is the story of the Bible, as man, through transgression, finds his life marked by one form of tribulation after another.

As recorded in John 16:33, Jesus told His disciples virtually the same thing: *"33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."*

His words are intended to comfort those whom He has chosen, but they also state a very real consequence of man's life on Earth. He is born to experience tribulation.

Having noted this, it is important to draw a distinct line between general tribulation and the specifically prophesied period of time that is intended for the House of David and the twelve tribes of Israel. Remember, Israel is the spiritual name that God gave to the father of the twelve tribes.

"And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Genesis 32:28).

The occasion for this statement was Jacob's all-night wrestling match with the angel of the Lord, who gave him a new regal title, and a special promise. From this time forward, Israel and his progeny were to have a special power and calling.

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They also had God's backing, so that no matter how deeply they were persecuted, they were always guaranteed the promise of restoration. In a strong sense, this is the reason for the coming Tribulation. The thirtieth chapter of Jeremiah speaks eloquently about the final restoration of Israel and Judah to the Promised Land.

Jeremiah 30:3 says, *"For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it."*

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The same chapter goes on to say the conditions of their return. Jeremiah paints a fearsome picture, that coins a phrase that has come to represent the Tribulation in a special way.

"6 Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? 7 Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. 8 For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: 9 But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them" (Jeremiah 30:6-9)

Here we see all the classic images of the Tribulation. Jeremiah speaks of the birth pangs that will accompany Israel's rebirth in the Land. We also see the "day" mentioned. This is "the day of the Lord," which will release Israel from the Gentile bonds under which she has labored for centuries. Finally, Jeremiah foresees the restoration of the Davidic throne, upon which Jesus will be seated.

This is specifically a prophecy of the latter days, during which the Lord will redeem Jacob – Israel – and make with Him a new covenant, written not upon stone tablets, but upon the hearts of His people.

Thus, the major outcome of the Tribulation is the restoration of Israel to the Land. It is the time of "Jacob's trouble," not the "Gentiles" trouble. In Daniel's great prophecy of the seventy weeks, we see another view of this same revelation:

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy" (Daniel 9:24).

About this statement, it is important to see that it is intended for Israel. The seventy weeks (or seventy sevens) are directed specifically at, "thy people," in other words, Israel,

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and “thy holy city,” or Jerusalem. This is a timed prophecy whose major consequence is concerned only with Israel, not the Gentiles.

The verse above mentions six specific objectives, which the “seventy weeks” period will bring to Israel.

First, Israel’s “transgression” will be brought to a close. Her failure to keep God’s covenant over the centuries will, at last, be brought to a gracious end by the Lord. His arrival at the end of the final week will bring the great Atonement to His people, Israel.

Second, “sins” will cease. The centuries of Israel’s sins will be erased, at last. Third, the “iniquity” that Israel has demonstrated since its beginning, in a failure to keep the Law of Moses, is reconciled.

Fourth, “everlasting righteousness” will come. Of course, this is the promise of the Messianic Kingdom.

Fifth, Daniel’s “vision and prophecy” will finally be realized, and sealed once and for all. The statements of the prophets will become reality, at last.

Sixth, the “most Holy” will be brought into powerful reality, as Christ and His Temple form the basis for a thousand-year Kingdom. In the end, there must be a literal, physical Temple.

The first sixty-nine of these weeks mark the time from the decree to restore Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity, to the crucifixion of Christ. After they have been accomplished, Daniel’s people are seen entering into an indeterminate period of persecution. Today, we refer to it as the “Diaspora.”

“25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined” (Daniel 9:25,26).

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Following the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70, Israel was wracked with one catastrophe after another, until they were finally driven abroad, seeking survival in many countries. The “people of the prince that shall come” – the Romans – made certain that Israel and Judah were hounded to the ends of the Earth. But the end of the prophecy concerns a coming prince who is a genetic offspring of the Romans, specifically of the royal house of Titus and Vespasian, the destroyers of the Temple. He is the Antichrist.

Elsewhere, we have described how the Seleucid dynasty that included Antiochus IV Epiphanes intermarried with these royal Roman houses. Antiochus, a type of the Antichrist, established the very bloodline that will bring forth the Antichrist of the latter days. Today, this Roman lineage has spread to cover the entire world. No one can know his precise point of origin. But the bloodline of the evil prince awaits its moment in history.

THE SEVENTIETH WEEK

It will be a simple thing to discern the beginning of Daniel’s seventieth week. It is marked by the moment that the coming prince (the Antichrist) stands in support of God’s ancient covenant with Israel. It will include the covenant of the Land, made to Abraham:

“27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate” (Daniel 9:27).

Again, we see that this seventieth “seven” (called a “week”) is directed specifically toward the fulfillment of prophecy in Israel. It involves Temple sacrifice, tainted by the

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evil and occultic abominations that are clarified in other passages that concern the Antichrist.

Most importantly, however, we find that the act that opens the week is the Antichrist's confirmation of the covenant. Up to the time that he commits this act, the entire week rests unfulfilled.

Some, arguing for a shortened Tribulation, have suggested that part of the week may have been consumed during the time of the Lord's first coming, but that simply cannot be the case. If it were, then he couldn't be said to confirm the covenant for one week.

For national Israel, it is the Lord's desire that they completely rely upon His leading. In the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses explains to his people why they must keep His commandments. He prophesies that in the future, their failure to do this would result in their scattering among the nations of the world. This prophecy contains the following statement:

"30 When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice: 31 (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them." (Deuteronomy 4:30,31).

Here, the Tribulation Period is identified as the culmination of several millennia of disobedience. But Moses' intent is to let his people know that even after all that time, God will not forget the covenant He made with them.

All He desires is their sincere and repentant acknowledgment of His power and sufficiency. In Daniel 12:7, which refers to the second half of the tribulation period, we see the same thought expressed:

"7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished" (Daniel 12:7).

Here, the "scattering" of the power of the "holy people" (Israel), tells us that this extended period of suffering under the Antichrist is a grim necessity. Only after the most grueling of tests will the remnant of Israel finally bow to their God and King.

Over the centuries, they have stubbornly clung to their own "strength," relying upon their own talents and virtues, instead of God's provision. As we shall see, Daniel's

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prophecy unequivocally links the breaking of their self-reliance with the full development of a seven-year Tribulation.

There must be a Tribulation Period, because it is the mechanism through which the Lord will restore Israel and establish the Kingdom.

OTHER REASONS FOR THE TRIBULATION

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Throughout the Old Testament there are numerous prophecies that link the Tribulation period with Israel. To name a few, Joel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos and Zechariah refer to the Day of the Lord, or even “the great and terrible Day of the Lord” (Joel 2:31), as a time of unprecedented upheaval that initiates a new order of reality upon Earth.

As we noted earlier, in reference to the time of Jacob’s Trouble, these prophecies always focus upon Israel. In Deuteronomy, there are references to Tribulation or Trouble. Isaiah and Jeremiah refer to birth pangs that bring forth a new Israel, which at last, comes into possession of the Abrahamic land grant.

Isaiah also calls it “the Day of the Lord,” and “the Day of Vengeance.” Elsewhere, it is referred to as a “Day of Distress, Desolation, Darkness and Wrath.” Without a doubt, its major consequence will be upon the nation through which it was revealed to the world, namely Israel.

In Luke 21:22-25, Jesus links the Tribulation Period with the end of the era of Gentile ascendancy, and rising again of Israel:

“22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. 24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. 25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;”

At the same time, the Tribulation will end the long period of judicial blindness that has been placed upon Israel as punishment for its failure to keep the Mosaic Law and its rejection of Jesus, the Messiah. Romans 11:25 makes it plain that with the end of the Gentile economy, Israel’s blindness will cease:

“25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery est ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”

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The Tribulation will also bring an unprecedented period of Messianic anticipation, leading to a revival of magnificent proportions. The seventh chapter of Revelation tells of the sealing of a spiritual vanguard, drawn from the twelve tribes of Israel – the 144,000. They are shown in the context of a great revival that covers the entire world.

As Israel is raised to its prophesied dominance over the Gentile world, the Tribulation will also purge the earth of wicked men and the influence of wickedness, as seen in Isaiah 13:6-11:

“6 Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. 7 Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man’s heart shall melt: 8 And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. 9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. 10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. 11 And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.”

ONE SUPERMAN – SEVEN YEARS

We have already looked at the beginning of Daniel’s Seventieth Week as the time when the Antichrist stands in affirmation of Israel’s Covenant. It is worth repeating that since this act opens the week, it sets off a chain of events that will take seven years to complete.

As this is written, the week awaits fulfillment. Some have said that since this week of seven years is referenced only once in the entire Bible (in Daniel 9:27), it does not offer sufficient proof that the Tribulation really is a seven-year period. As noted above, they therefore argue in favor of a three-and-a-half-year period.

But Daniel’s full exposition of the Antichrist’s government is not given until chapter eleven. The 45 verses of this chapter are devoted to an account of the ruling powers who descended from Alexander the Great, following his death in 323 B.C. Alexander, the “mighty king” of Daniel 11:3, became the leader of a world-dominating army.

Cassander, Lysimachus, Ptolomy and Seleucus, the four generals among whom his kingdom was subsequently divided, are chronicled by Daniel. But toward the middle of the chapter, only Ptolomy and Seleucus are mentioned. Near the chapter’s end, the focus is narrowed to Seleucus alone, followed by his dynasty. The most notorious member of

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this dynasty is Antiochus IV Epiphanes (called the “vile person” in Daniel 11:21), to whom is reserved a large descriptive passage.

Daniel 11:21 through 35 are devoted to one of Scripture’s most detailed profiles of the Antichrist. Antiochus typifies this evil man as totally enveloped in a consuming hatred of Israel. He even attempts to overthrow their “holy covenant” with God. But Antiochus is only the type of the grim reality who will arise in the days of the Tribulation.

Daniel 11:36-45 then brings us a look at that reality – the prophecy of the so-called “willful king.” Virtually all reliable expositors view this king as the Antichrist. He is the ultimate megalomaniac, who exalts himself even above God. Daniel’s prophecy reveals him as a strange man of bizarre power, who is given to dark practices and lustful appetites:

“36 And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. 37 Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. 38 But in his estate shall he honor the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. 39 Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain” (Daniel 11:36-39).

This prophecy shows the Antichrist in the developmental period of his reign. He is free to exercise his will, and to engage in the most blatant self-exaltation. Furthermore, he will apparently have the power to utter miraculously powerful words against God – he will challenge God and appear for a time to be winning! Not only that, he is said to “prosper” throughout the Tribulation. That is, even while the world is wracked by physical and spiritual upheavals of all kinds, his plans will succeed, even to the end of the Tribulation.

He will stand as a singular and phenomenal man, whose power and purpose will finally be revealed as wholly Satanic. Without reliance upon family, or a traditional faith in God, he will stand as the ultimate arch-fiend, unencumbered by any responsibility.

No doubt, he will re-awaken the worship of the ancient pagan gods. More than that, the world will see him as empowered by intelligent alien forces, perhaps presenting themselves as the ancient creators of mankind, now returned to take stock of their work, and bring it to a new evolutionary level. In any case, the Antichrist will certainly play to the modern mythologies of mankind, including the widespread belief that occult alien intelligences are present and offer man the hope of new life. Clearly, verses 36 through

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39 speak of the progression of events that bring the Antichrist to his zenith, which Jesus called “the abomination of desolation,” in Matthew 24:15.

But Jesus places this event at the middle of the Tribulation, not the end. He warns those in Judea (not the Gentile world) to flee to the mountains when they see this desecration of the Temple. He warns them not even to pause to take their possessions, but to run for their lives. Then, He says:

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21).

In other words, the worst part of the Tribulation comes after the Abomination of Desolation! The usual thought is that this title represents the judgments of the second half of the Tribulation. To place Antichrist’s rise to power, political consolidation in warfare against his opponents, economic development and claim to godhood – plus the Great Tribulation – within a cramped and limiting three-and-a-half-year period, simply does not allow enough time for all the prophesied events to happen. Returning to the picture given by Daniel, we discover the same necessity for a seven-year period. Daniel 11:40 – 45 tell of the time period on or about the time when he first begins to declare his claim to godhood:

“40 And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. 41 He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. 42 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps. 44 But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. 45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.”

In these verses, it is made quite obvious that not everyone agrees with his claim to world leadership. Various powers – kings of the south, east and north – attempt to thwart his plans. He is also shown at war with several powers of the Middle East.

But note in particular verses 44 and 45, where his forces are sent out in power and destroy those enemies – “to make away many.” Here, the original language indicates that he “cuts them off” or “sweeps them away.”

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Then, he set up his headquarters “between the seas,” that is, between the Mediterranean and Dead Seas. He resides in Jerusalem, “in the glorious holy mountain.” In other words, he reigns from Mount Zion. He is victorious.

All of this has taken place prior to his final declaration of godhood. How do we know this? Because the very next verse – Daniel 12:1 – is as clear a reference to the second half of the Tribulation as can be found anywhere in Scripture:

“1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” (Daniel 12:1).

WHAT TIME?

Here, we must ask a question about the phrase “that time,” in the verse above. Very simply, we need to know what time is being referenced. And the time is plainly indicated by the context to which it refers, namely, the time of the Antichrist’s rise to power, his declaration of godhood and his successful campaign against his enemies. This is the time period outlined in the preceding verses – Daniel 11:36-45.

All of these details must be resolved before he can stand up as the infamous despot of Revelation 13. Here, we see “that time” as the opening of the most violent period – the second half of the seven years. And at “that time,” Michael, the archangel who fights for Israel on God’s behalf, is said to stand and begin his defense in earnest.

This corresponds exactly with Revelation 12:6-8, and the events which plainly mark the beginning of the second half of Daniel’s seventieth week:

“6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. 7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.” (Revelation 12:6-8)

Here, the 1,260 days (three-and-a-half years) correspond exactly with the period referenced by Daniel. It is the time of Jacob’s Trouble, when Israel goes into hiding. This could not have taken place during the Antichrist’s ascendancy, while he was preoccupied with securing his position and controlling the Gentile powers that sought to defeat him.

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In fact, Daniel 12:5-7 refers to this three-and-a-half-year period as “a time, times, and a half.” In other words, from the time the Antichrist set up his headquarters on Mount Zion, until the end of the Tribulation will be three-and-a-half years:

“5 Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. 6. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? 7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.” (Daniel 12:5-7).



16th Century illustration of Michael the Archangel by German artist, Hans Holbein the Younger

As mentioned earlier, this “scattering’ or breaking down the self-reliant arrogance of a prideful Israel takes place at the end of the Tribulation period, not the beginning. The question put forth here is “How long until the end?” It is perfectly obvious that the time in question is, “How long from the time the Antichrist sets up his palace between the seas until the end of the Tribulation period?”

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The answer is three and a half years, with the stipulation that there will be an additional period at the end. To emphasize the point, Daniel 12:11 mentions the Abomination of Desolation once again:

"11 And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days." (Daniel 12:11).

13

In the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24, Jesus tells those in Judea to flee when they see this abomination. The points of comparison in Daniel, Matthew and Revelation establish beyond a doubt that the Antichrist requires a considerable amount of time – at least three-and-a-half years – to establish his power.

After that, Israel is persecuted for another three-and-a-half years. That adds up to seven years, plus an additional period of time:

"12 Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty day" (Daniel 12:12).

Daniel is told here that the closing three-and-a-half years of the Tribulation would have an addendum. First, in verse 11, we are told of an additional 30 days, bringing the total to 1,290 days. Then, in verse 12, we are informed that there will be a blessing beyond that, to those who wait for 1,335 days to elapse. This makes the second half of the Tribulation three-and-a-half years in length, with the addition of another two-and-a-half months. Most students agree that this brief period corresponds to the time of Christ's coming at the end of the Tribulation.

And what is the blessing? Possibly, it is the time for the judgment and prosecution of the beast and false prophet, as given in Revelation 19. Whatever it is, it lies beyond the seven years of Daniel's seventieth week.

THE FIRST HALF OF THE WEEK

Given that there is a prophetically-important period following the Tribulation, could there also be one before the seven years? With specific reference to the Antichrist, how much of his development occurs before the confirmation of the covenant with Israel (Daniel 9:27)? As the Lamb opens the first seal in sequence, the Antichrist rides forth as a conqueror:

"2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer." (Revelation 6:2).

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Here, the false messiah rides forth as a conqueror. This seal marks the initiation of his empire-building activities. But at this point, it cannot be said with certainty that he has confirmed the covenant with the leaders of Israel. The Antichrist's white horse and the other three horses that accompany it seem to mark only the bare beginnings of his evil empire. Much time will be required for him to do battle with God's two witnesses and the armies of the Gentile world, then to be supernaturally revealed as the incarnation of Satan.

Here, the words of Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, in *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, are most appropriate:

“So when the Antichrist signs a seven year covenant with Israel, the last week, or the last seven years of God's prophetic time clock for Israel begins ticking away. This and only this is the starting point of the seven years of the tribulation. “In the light of this it should be very evident that it is not the Rapture which begins the tribulation. As has already been shown, the Rapture will occur sometime before the tribulation. It may come just before the tribulation, or it may come a number of years before the tribulation.”

Other well-known expositors hold this same view. If, for example, the Rapture were to occur two or three years before the Tribulation, then the global government of Mystery Babylon could begin a period of amalgamation that would see its conclusion well before the Antichrist's confirmation of the covenant and the beginning of Daniel's seventieth week.

Thus, when the Antichrist rides forth with the red horse of war, the black horse of economic collapse and the pale horse of death, it will be to demolish the existing geopolitical system. Later, he will replace the one he destroyed with his own – a diabolical system of identification marks and despotic control.

TEN YEARS PLUS?

From the moment of the Rapture, until the conclusion of Daniel's 1,335 days could well comprise a period of over ten years in duration. It might be much less, but certain typological precedents indicate a longer, rather than shorter, period. One thing is certain, a global government cannot be established without a fight. Daniel's prophecy points this out with great clarity!

Nor can it be established overnight. Consolidation of powers and treaties with powerful factions will take time. Only then will the Antichrist be in a position to promise anything.

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Of course, his promise to Israel, and his confirmation of the covenant, is the factor that initiates the seventieth week. Finally, in Paul's prophecy of the Antichrist, we see exactly this picture. His "man of sin" cannot be revealed until certain prerequisite events have taken place. His prophecy is quite unequivocal on this point:

"3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." (II Thessalonians 2:3,4).

15

Paul tells the Thessalonians that "that day" (the Day of the Lord) cannot come imminently, or without warning. He says that two things must happen first.

First, a "falling away" must come. Many discussions have arisen about what this means. Some have said that the term indicates a full-blown apostasy, or falling-away from the faith in God. Others have said that the Greek verb here may indicate a "departing," or going-away. In so saying, they state a belief that it is the Rapture that is referred to here. In either case, an indeterminate time is said to elapse between this "falling away" and the Tribulation.

Second, the "man of sin" – Antichrist – must be revealed. And it must be acknowledged that this is merely the beginning of his revelation to the world. Following that, as we have pointed out, much time will be required for him to capture the power systems of the world and turn them to his own use. Then, he must confirm the covenant with Israel before the Day of the Lord (The Tribulation) can be initiated.

It is a certainty that Daniel's seventieth week is a full seven years in length, plus some additional time at its beginning and after its end. It will be preceded by an undetermined length of time, possibly up to three years in length. And afterward, a "clean-up" period of two-and-a-half months duration follows the seven-year Tribulation. As a faithful believer in the Pretribulation Rapture of the church, be thankful that you will never personally suffer under the Antichrist. Long before he is known to the world – long before he confirms the covenant with Israel – you will be present with the Lord.

Neither will you experience the cataclysms of the Tribulation. You will be with Him, watching as He prepares planet Earth for the Kingdom Age.

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