

Tribulation – The Purpose Of

What is the Purpose of the Tribulation, and Will I Be There if it Happens?

The Tribulation is one of the most significant periods of God's dealing with humankind and certainly occupies a most prominent place in His prophetic plan. More space is dedicated to that little seven-year period than any other comparable time frame in the Bible. It is mentioned over fifty times in the Old Testament by such expressions as "the day of calamity," "day of wrath," "the day of the Lord's wrath," "the day of Jacob's trouble," "the day of vengeance of our God," "time of trouble", "and "the day of the Lord." In every case it is talking about the nation of Israel.

Man Will Never Destroy the World: We hear a great deal of speculation as to whether or not human beings will ever destroy the world. That this could never happen is seen by the fact that God projects seven years in the future destined for His people Israel, which will be consummated in the physical coming of Christ to the earth to set up His millennial kingdom. Everything God determines and predicts in His Word will happen. Therefore, we can say without reservation that human beings will not destroy the world.

Purpose of the Tribulation: We should examine God's purpose in sending the 7-year Tribulation. We are not left to conjecture, for it was revealed to Daniel at the same time he received the prediction of the "seventy sevens" (which both the context and the Hebrew word mean "weeks" of years or 490 years); note especially (Daniel 9).

God never does anything without a purpose, and in this verse, we find that He had six things in mind.

Dan. 9:24 "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.

1. "To finish transgression." This time of suffering will finish the transgression of Israel, which is the rejection of her Messiah. During the Tribulation, the people of Israel will turn to Christ in great revival and will become witnesses who will go forth and preach the Gospel around the world.
2. "To put an end to sin." The words "put an end" literally mean, "to seal up." This period will end with the binding of Satan, which will "seal up" sin. Humanity's cup of iniquity is filled to overflowing, and God will bring judgment on the earth for their rejection of His Son.
3. "To atone for wickedness." Again, this is a reference to the revival of Israel, when they will be reconciled to God through Him whom they rejected and who they asked Pilate to crucify.
4. "To bring in everlasting righteousness." When Israel experiences her revival, the age of righteousness or the millennial kingdom of Christ will be ushered in. Though there will be a brief insurrection at the end, it will be so short lived as not to interrupt this final

period of everlasting righteousness that will lead into the new era of the future, described (in Revelations chapters 21 and 22).

5. "To seal up vision and prophecy." When Israel has turned to Christ, there will no longer be a need for prophet's visions and prophecy.
6. "To anoint the most holy." This could refer to the holy place on Mount Moriah where Solomon's Temple was built over the place where Abraham had prepared to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, symbolically preparing the way for Israel to have her sins cleansed through the anticipation of the eventual death of Christ on the cross. This purpose may also refer to the millennial kingdom that will consummate the Tribulation and usher in that age of righteousness for which all Christians yearn, the only answer to the heartaches and problems of the world.

What Begins the Tribulation Period: The actual event that inaugurates the Tribulation is found (in Dan. 9:27), when the Antichrist, "the ruler who will come," makes a covenant with Israel for 7 years. Even though he will break that covenant, his signing will trigger the prophetic clock of God, and from that moment on only seven years will be left for the human race on the earth.

One of the reasons we know Christ is coming before the Tribulation to Rapture His Church is because the Rapture is a secret thing. The Glorious Appearing will not be secret but well known, for exactly seven years will elapse from the signing of the covenant to the Glorious Appearing of Christ on the earth.

Since it seems evident that the coming of Christ is close at hand, people living today are keenly interested in whether or not they will have to live under the Antichrist during the Tribulation. In all probability, most of the present generation will go into the Tribulation. The great exception to that is the Church of Jesus Christ. If you are a member of the body of Christ, that is, if you have personally invited Jesus Christ into your heart, you will not go into the Tribulation.

The Bible tells us (in 1 Thess. 1:10), that the Lord Jesus "rescues us from the coming wrath," referring to the Tribulation period. (Revelation 3:10), also clarifies "Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth."

God's Purpose in the Great Tribulation: Not to understand that this impending period of Great Tribulation is of divine purpose and intent is to fail to understand significant truths relative to these coming events. Tim LaHaye gives the following four purposes as being discernible from the Scriptures:

- To introduce a worldwide revival when, under the preaching of the 144,000 servants of God, a multitude will be gathered that no one can number [144,000](#) (Rev. 7:4-8).
- To destroy the wicked followers of Antichrist who are committed to his way, lest they pollute others and corrupt them from the truth of the gospel, thus damning their souls.
- To break the stubborn will of the nation of Israel, who will confess her national sin of rejecting the Messiah and plead for His return.
- To shake the earth and all things in it so that one's normal sense of security will be so disordered that one will be more prone to look to God. Crises usually cause people to

look to God. The Tribulation will be a time when God creates a climate of crisis, a climate conducive for human beings to call on Him while He is near.

One of the greatest misconceptions about the pre-Tribulation Rapture is that it starts the Tribulation. IT DOES NOT! (Dan. 9:27), is clear: The signing of the covenant between the Antichrist and Israel begins the seven-year Tribulation, not the Rapture. The Rapture could happen a day, a week, or several years prior to the signing of that covenant.

Judgment and mercy: The Tribulation is a terrifying period of 7 years in which God pours out His wrath on a rebellious and unbelieving mankind. It is also “the time of Jacob’s trouble,” in which the Lord will once again deal specifically with the nation of Israel, bringing the Jewish people to faith in Jesus Christ, the Messiah they rejected almost 2000 years ago.

Yet while this period is primarily a time of wrath and judgment, it also features a very strong note of mercy and grace, a note that too often gets overlooked. Sometimes we think God gets a “bad rap” when people focus exclusively on the judgments and terrors to come. They see the Lord as some kind of angry monster, heaping up catastrophes and pouring them on the heads of defenseless, innocent men and women, like an obnoxious child might pour gasoline down a teeming anthill with one hand while getting ready to drop a lit match with the other.

But this is wrong! First, those who suffer the judgments of God in the Tribulation are NOT “innocent men and women.” The rebels alive at that time will not only reject God and His offer of salvation but will run greedily toward every vile sin known to man, including blasphemy of a kind beyond description. And second, despite their gross sin, God intends that these Tribulation judgments might lead even these wicked sinners to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ!

The Tribulation judgments of God serve a dual purpose; to punish hardened sinners and to move others to repentance and faith. The Tribulation will be God’s ultimate illustration of the truth found in Romans:

Romans 11:22 “Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God.” It is true that the Tribulation will demonstrate God’s severity, but it is equally true that it will showcase His goodness. The Old Testament prophet Joel clearly saw these two aspects of God’s nature working side by side in the Tribulation. (In Joel 2:28-32), the Lord said through him.

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions”. “And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit”. “And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke”. “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come”. “And it shall come to pass, that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered”.