

## Three Divisions of the Tribulation Period

with Brief Discussions concerning Wrath & the Churches, the Rapture, & Christ's Imminent Coming

Some of the problems with trying to communicate with others our eschatological position is coming to the same ground so that we can understand terms alike. For example, the term 'tribulation period' is a big term. It covers a lot of territory. The whole world shall come into great tribulation at some point in time. To the church at Philadelphia the Lord Jesus said,

*Re 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*

This tribulation can be divided into three parts.

1. Tribulation for Israel, & then salvation.
2. Tribulation for the churches, then the first resurrection. And,
3. Tribulation for all of the living, unregenerate inhabitants of the earth, then cast off to suffer eternal perdition.

### Tribulation for Israel & then Salvation

The first part of the tribulation period comes upon the nation of Israel. There is coming a time of great tribulation to the people of God, national Israel and the Jewish people. Satan, through his instrument, the Antichrist, shall execute 'great wrath [cf. Re.12.12-]' in an attempt to destroy the nation of Israel and the Jewish people.

*Re.12.12 ¶ Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*

*13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.*

*14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.*

*15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.*

*16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.*

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This is the time of 'Jacob's trouble.' (cf. Jer.30.7; Mt.24.14-21; Re.12.1-6, 13-15) But as we just read, they shall be delivered. (cf. Re.12.16) It is my opinion but the history of the book of Revelation and the tribulation period must coincide with what is called the last week of the seventy weeks of Daniel. (cf. Dan.9.24-27) The Lord then deals with Israel, brings them into His new covenant, and so all Israel shall be saved. (cf. Ez.20.33-44; Ro.11.26) The Dragon, the Devil, Satan, through the man of sin, the Antichrist, failing to destroy Israel, TURNS to another people of God.

### Tribulation for the Churches & then the First Resurrection

The second part of the tribulation period is when Satan, again, through the man of sin, turns his attention to the saints of God (this is particularly against the churches of Jesus Christ). (cf. Re.12.17)

*Re.12.17 And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (The plain sense of the phrase 'remnant of her seed' says that the saints of God or the churches of Jesus Christ came through the woman, Israel.)*

The Antichrist shall make war with the saints and shall overcome them. (cf. Re.13.7) The term 'saint's', as used in the NT is always with reference to the faithful, holy members of the Lord's churches. Especially in this portion of Scripture (cf. Re.12.17) it cannot refer to the Jewish people (the Jews were in v.16), or to what I call 'believers-at-large,' them that have faith in Christ but which have never identified themselves by baptism and a purposeful joining to the one of the Lord's churches. Brethren, it cannot be said of 'believers-at-large' that 'they keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (v.17; cf. Re.14.12).' (comp. Re.1.9; Jn.17.14, 21, 22) This text, Re.12.17, refers to the saints of the churches of Jesus Christ. This means that the churches experience this part of the tribulation period. This is not an outpouring of the wrath of God, but the *great wrath* (cf. Re.12.12) of the Dragon, the Devil wrought through his man, the man of sin.

*Re.12.12 ¶ Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*

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It should not be surprising to hear that the churches of Jesus Christ shall see and know who the man of sin is when he appears. Our Lord Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul said as much.

*Mt.24.15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)*

...

*21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

*1Th.2.3 ¶ 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, shewing himself that he is God.*

Listen, if this was not so why would we need to know anything about him and what he will do? Apparently we need to know that it is that many of the saints of God shall experience the wrath of that wicked man. It explains why many of the saints suddenly appear in the presence of the Lord. (cf. Re.7.13, 14)

*Re.7.13 ¶ And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?*

*14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

*Re 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*

Few of the saints of the churches will bodily survive this terrible time. (cf. Mt.16.28; 1Th.4.15, 17, *we which are alive and remain* ) It is my opinion that after the saints of God have suffered the wrath of the man of sin to the extent that the Lord allows (cf. Ps.76.10, *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*), then will arrive the time of the first resurrection of the faithful saints of the churches of Jesus Christ. It is my opinion that the first resurrection pertains only to the faithful saints of the Old and New Testaments. The Scripture states that *'the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.* (Re.20.5) I take the words *'the rest of the dead lived not*

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*again'* to partly refer to some that shall at the last resurrection *live again*, but not now.

*Joh 11:24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.*

However in the first resurrection, the first thing to happen is for both the living and the dead saints to meet the Lord in the air. (cf. 1Th.4.16b-17a ... *and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air:*) It could be that this is the time for the saints to stand before the Bema Seat of Christ, the Judgment Seat of Christ, to receive the allotments of their inheritance in the kingdom. (Ro. 14:10 ... *we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*) Then there is the final part of tribulation period.

### Tribulation for the Entire Unregenerate World & Their Destruction

In this third part of the tribulation period is the outpouring of the wrath of Almighty God and of the Lamb. (cf. Re.6.16; 14.9, 10; 19.15)

*Re.14.9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,  
10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb ...*

Israel has been taken someplace where the LORD deals with them, the saints have been resurrected and are probably standing in judgment before the Lord, neither of whom shall suffer under the hand of God's wrath. Now, it is my opinion that at this time the believing (the unchurch-related believers) that have survived until now on the earth shall be sheltered by the sovereign hand of God as He unleashes the worst judgments the world has ever known since the history of mankind. Of the believing turn to Is.26.19-21. Verse 19 appears to be a reference to the resurrection.

*Is.26.19 Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.*

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20 ¶ *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.*

21 *For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.*

The judgments that fall upon the earth are represented in the book of Revelation by an outpouring of seven golden vials full of the wrath of God. (cf. Re.15.7; 16.1)

*Re.16.4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.*

5 *And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.*

6 *For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.*

When this the tribulation period is complete Christ shall return to this earth, and will execute His own wrath upon the forces of the Gentiles.

*Re.19.11 ¶ And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.*

12 *His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.*

13 *And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.*

14 *And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.*

15 *And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

16 *And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

*2Th.1.7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,*

8 *In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:*

9 *Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;*

10 *When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.*

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Our Lord Jesus will judge the living nations, separating them into two groups, groups called sheep and goats: sheep simply meaning the elect, believing among the Gentiles and the goats meaning the reprobate, unbelieving Gentiles. (Mt.25.31-46) The sheep, which are clearly in their natural bodies, shall enter into the millennium and the goats are cast into the lake of fire. Then, Christ will set up His millennial kingdom, the faithful saints of God that have ever living in human history (glorified) shall rule and reign with Christ and regenerate Israel shall be the greatest nation on the earth. (cf. Deu.28.13)

*Deu.28.13 And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them.*

### A Brief Consideration of the Term 'Rapture'

Let's now turn our attention to the term 'rapture' just for a moment. The use of this word has only confused the issue of the doctrine of the first resurrection. It is a completely useless term. If we were to look at the Oxford English Dictionary we would find that it has no religious connotation to it at all. The LATEST citation for this word hales from the year 1894. This alone reveals that the rapture doctrine is not an ancient teaching of the churches of Jesus Christ. Quoting another source,

*'The idea of a rapture as it is currently defined is not found in historic Christianity, but is a relatively recent doctrine of Evangelical Protestantism. The term is most frequently used among Evangelical Protestant theologians in the United States.'*

With this in mind we should look again at the text of Scripture that is supposed to be the basis of the rapture doctrine, no not Re.4.1, but 1Th.4.16, 17. Let's lay aside the rapture idea and put it in its proper, Biblical setting, which setting is the first resurrection.

*1Th.4.16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:  
17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

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The hope of the NT Christian is not the rapture but the resurrection; specifically the first resurrection. (cf. Ac.23.6)

*Re 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection (nothing about a rapture or raptures of God's people): on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

The first resurrection is described in clearest terms in Job 19.25-27, 1Co.15.51-57, 1Th.4.14-17.

*Job 19.25 For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:*

*26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:*

*27 Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.*

*1Co.15.51 ¶ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,*

*52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

*53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

*54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*

*55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

*56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.*

*57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*1Th.4.14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

*15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

*16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

*17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

Now when is the first resurrection? By this question it is not my intention to set a day, week, month or year. No. Rather, let us try our best to arrange this so that it harmonizes with the whole tenor of Scriptures that touch on the same subject.

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So, when shall the saints of the churches be called up to meet the Lord in the air? For this I put my finger on the text of Re.11.15 and the time of this event.

*Re.11.15 And the seventh angel sounded (his trumpet, the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet); and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*

This is the time of the sounding of the seventh trumpet. It is a fact that the seventh trumpet is the 'last' of seven trumpets that were to sound (cf. 1Co.15.52, *the last trump*);

*1Co.15.51 ¶ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,  
52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

This is called the trump of God (cf. 1Th.4.16, *the trump of God*)

*1Th.4.16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:  
17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

The text of Re.11.15 is a sweeping statement that includes more than the first resurrection. In it the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever. Isn't it interesting that the text of Re.11.15, and I don't want to make too much of this point, is the center chapter of the book of Revelation, chapter 11 of 22 chapters?

### Discerning the Differences of Wrath During the Tribulation Period

We've already touch on this some in the above remarks. There needs to be some discernment here concerning the wrath that is being executed. In Revelation there are two major kinds of wrath, the wrath of the man (specifically the Antichrist) and the wrath of Almighty God. Some suppose that the book of Revelation is essentially an outpouring of the wrath of God. Because of this they refer to 1Th.5.9, 10 that '9 ... *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that, whether we*



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*wake or sleep, we should live together with him.*' This being the case that we are not appointed to suffer the wrath of God, therefore all believers must be raptured away (a pretribulation rapture). They say the rapture occurs directly after the Lord addresses the seven churches of Asia (Re. chs.2, 3) and then point to Re.4.1, and the words of the Lord to the apostle John, '*come up hither.*' But there are a few difficulties with this interpretation.

1. There must be a distinction made between what is the wrath of man and the wrath of God.
2. The words to John, '*come up hither,*' only resulted in John being *in the spirit*. The resurrection is always a bodily resurrection. (cf. Re.4.2, *immediately I was in the spirit*) It is heresy to say that the resurrection is only spiritual.
3. If the words '*come up hither*' was a rapture then why were there still two witnesses on the earth, to whom the Lord also said to them '*come up hither?*' (cf. Re.11.12)

The book of Revelation is not a record of only the wrath of God. It includes the wrath of the Dragon, the Devil who works in the Antichrist to do His evil work.

*2Th.2.9 Even him [the wicked one (v.8), the son of perdition (v.3), the man of sin (v.3)], whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

For this reason we have good reason to teach that the churches shall suffer under the hand of the man of sin, the Antichrist and therefore this part of what is called the tribulation period.

### Will Any Be Saved During the Tribulation Period?

The Scriptures lead me to think that during the tribulation period, apart from the nation of Israel, no Gentiles will be saved, no Gentiles will come to faith in Christ. To say otherwise seems to contradict several Scriptures.

Firstly, three times in the book of Revelation it states that men 'repented not!' (cf. Re.9.20, 21; 16.8, 9, 10, 11)

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*Re.9.20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:  
21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.*

*Re.16.8 ¶ And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.*

*9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.*

*10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,*

*11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.*

And lastly, this seems to harmonize with the idea that there is a time during the NT era when all of the Gentiles shall be saved. The fulness of the numbers of Gentiles saved appears to be completed just prior to the salvation of Israel.

*Ro.11.25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest 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.*

*26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob ...*

When the elect of the nations (Gentiles) has been reaped to the full then the LORD will turn to save Israel, the Jewish people, to bring them into the bond of the covenant! (Ro.11.26; Ez.20.33-44)

The book of Revelation and the tribulation period is not a time for the salvation of Gentiles at all. The question that follows then is, Will any be saved during the millennial age? Or, Will anymore be saved before we arrive to the eternal age? The answer is yes there are more saved during the millennium. Look at the text of Is.65.20.

*Is.65.20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.*

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In the millennium death is still present, *'the child shall die an hundred years old,'* but there is longevity of life. Men will live for hundreds of years like them of the antediluvian world had lived. (cf. Genesis ch. 5) But the words, *'the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed'* suggests to me a final era when men the world-over shall come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Then is the eternal age.

### Is the Coming of Jesus Christ Imminent?

Do the Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ can come at any moment? I find that God has ordered it so that the coming of Christ cannot precede the coming of the man of sin. This statement cannot be successfully gainsaid.

*2Th.2.3 ¶ Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day (the day of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ & our gathering unto Him, [v.1]) shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition ...*

The truth is that the coming of the man of sin is imminent! Ever since Christ's ascension the coming of the man of sin has been imminent. The apostle John said as much.

*1Jo 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*

In every age since, Satan has had his man ready to come on the scene to do his dreadful work. How many times through history have we seen men that fit so much of what we understand the man of sin to be? Even in our day Christians point to this or that man and say that he could be the one. Certainly the coming of the man of sin is imminent. And after this wicked man comes then the day of Christ will arrive. I cannot delve into these texts tonight but I'll refer to them so that you might look into them later in your studies. These are the Scriptures that some say prove the imminent coming of Christ.

*Mt.24.44, 44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.* Christ commands readiness against the unknown hour of Christ's coming.

*Mt.25.13, 13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.* Again Christ commands watchfulness because we don't know the day or hour of Christ's coming.

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Mk.13.35-37, *35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:*

*36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.*

*37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.* Christ commands watchfulness because we don't know when the Master comes.

Lk.12.35-40, *37 Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: ... 39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. 40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.* The Lord commands us to be prepared as if one were always prepared against the coming of a thief, randomly & suddenly against our house to break in and steal.

1Co.15.51, 52, concerns the suddenness, '*In a moment, v.52*' in which we shall be changed whether we are dead or alive.

Re.22.20, says Jesus Christ comes quickly, suddenly, '*Surely I come quickly.*'

The fact is the Scriptures teach that the Lord's coming will be sudden, momentous. We are to be watchful concerning those things that He said indicate that that day is nearing. What indicators? The increase of false christs and false prophets in the last days, the deceptive practices of wicked men, indicators in the nation of Israel (the fig tree), signs in the sun, moon and stars, and lastly, the coming of the man of sin.

### Conclusion

In summary these are the things we considered under the heading of 'Three Divisions of the Tribulation Period:'

1. We divided the tribulation period into three parts. Two parts concerned the wrath of Antichrist, and the third, the wrath of God.
2. We briefly considered the term 'rapture.'
3. We looked into why the church would be present during a portion of the tribulation period, because the church shall suffer under the wrath of the man of sin.

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4. We considered that no Gentiles shall be saved during the tribulation period.  
And,
5. We gave a brief consideration to the idea of the imminent coming of Jesus Christ.

Then eternity. Christ brings His blood-bought people to a new heaven and a new earth. The rest perish for ever and ever in a lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Savior God sent to save you from sin?

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