

Briefing Document: Tribulation Terrors

– Lesson 1

Date: September 7, 2025

I. Core Concept of the Tribulation

The Tribulation is presented as a definitive seven-year period of the active wrath of God upon the world, distinct from natural consequences. It is a time when God actively intervenes in man's judgment, taking re-possession of the world because of its sin. This period is a central focus of end-times prophecy, particularly in the books of Daniel and Revelation.

II. Chronology and Structure of the Tribulation

The seven-year Tribulation is precisely divided into two distinct halves of three and a half years each.

- **Origin of the Seven-Year Period:** This understanding stems from Daniel 9, specifically the prophecy of seventy weeks, where each "week" represents seven years. Sixty-nine of these "weeks" (483 years) are identified as having passed from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (given to Nehemiah by Artaxerxes) to the death of Christ (Messiah "cut off"). The remaining "one week" (seven years) is the Tribulation, yet to occur.
- **Specific Calculation:** The teaching emphasizes using a 360-day calendar for historical calculations, leading to 173,880 days from the decree to Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem.
- **Uncertainty in Calculation:** The difficulty and varying interpretations of these mathematical calculations are acknowledged, with works by Robert Anderson and Harold Hoehner referenced as prominent but challenging resources.
- **Pre-Tribulation Rapture:** A foundational belief is that "the Lord will take the church out prior to the Tribulation." All believers in Jesus Christ will be removed before the Tribulation begins. This event, the Rapture, may precede and even trigger a cosmic battle in heaven.
- **The Two Halves: First Half (3.5 years):** Antichrist consolidates power and establishes a peace treaty with Israel. This period is less traumatic, with Satan "getting things ready." Some seal judgments from Revelation may occur here, though this is presented cautiously.

Second Half (3.5 years) – The Great Tribulation: The more intense and severe half begins with the desecration of the temple by the Antichrist. At this point he will "run roughshod over the world" and reveal his true character.

III. Key Figures and Their Roles

Antichrist: A central figure, described as “a man possessed of Satan,” though not Satan himself. Confirms a covenant with Israel for seven years and engineers a peace treaty. In the middle of the week (3.5 years), he will “bring an end to sacrifice and offering” by desecrating the Jewish Temple. Persecutes and wears out the saints of the Most High, chasing and executing believers. He will “intend to change the times and the law,” seeking preeminence. Sets up an image of the beast in the temple, which speaks and demands worship. Refusal will result in death.

Satan (The Dragon): Initially has free reign in the “first heaven” (atmosphere) and “second heaven” (outer space), accusing believers before Jesus. War in Heaven: Michael and his angels fight Satan and prevail. Satan and his demons are cast out of heaven to the earth, gaining full domain. Knowing his time is short, he descends with great wrath, intensifying persecution, particularly against Israel.

Israel (The Woman): Identified in Revelation 12 as “the woman who gave birth to the male child” (Jesus Christ). Satan persecutes her, historically and especially during the Great Tribulation. Divine Protection: Given “two wings of a great eagle,” interpreted as an airlift to a place of safety (possibly Petra), where she is nourished and protected for 3.5 years. Remnant: Two-thirds of Israel will perish, but one-third will survive.

Two Witnesses: Prophecy for 1,260 days (3.5 years), clothed in sackcloth. Eventually killed, then resurrected by the Lord.

Tribulation Saints: Many will come to faith during this period, even amid persecution. Referenced in Revelation 7:14 as those who “come out of the great tribulation.”

IV. Events and Characteristics of the Tribulation

Global Crisis: The world, already in turmoil, will experience unparalleled crisis during the Tribulation.

Temple Rebuilding and Sacrifices: At the beginning of the Tribulation, Israel will rebuild the temple (currently the site of the Dome of the Rock) and resume animal sacrifices, a time of great celebration.

Desecration of the Temple: At the midpoint, the Antichrist will desecrate the temple by setting up an idol to himself, which will demand worship. This recalls Antiochus’s desecration in the intertestamental period.

God’s Judgment – The Day of the Lord: Described in Zephaniah 1:15 as “A day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.” God will punish complacent sinners who say, “The Lord will not do good, nor will He do evil” (Zephaniah 1:12). There will be no relief from God’s wrath, terror, and judgment.

Gentile Role: Gentiles will trample the holy city underfoot for 42 months (3.5 years), as described in Revelation.

V. Interpretation and Application

Literal Interpretation: Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks and the 3.5-year divisions should be understood literally, not figuratively.

Non-Chronological Revelation: Revelation is not written in chronological order, requiring careful study and the use of resources to grasp the proper sequence of events.

Preparation and Witnessing: Believers are urged to understand these truths, teach them to children and grandchildren, and lead others to faith in Christ before the Tribulation begins.

Matthew 24: Jesus' teaching in Matthew 24 is highlighted as a primary source, with verses 4–8 likely describing the first half of the Tribulation.

Notes

- No Greek words appear in this document.
- All Scripture references match the NKJV.