Matthew 24:34  Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

--- Jesus Christ

Brief Review of Sessions 1 and 2

JESUS' DESCRIPTION OF 'THE GREAT TRIBULATION' PERIOD

Matthew 24:15-22  [NIV]

So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— [16] then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. [17] Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. [18] Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. [19] How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! [20] Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. [21] For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. [22] If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

Now Jesus gives the signs or occurrences that will take place during the great tribulation period. What is this period, how long will it last, and who is involved?

First of all, let us very clearly differentiate between man's inhumanity to man (which has been going on since the beginning of human history and which appears to be even escalating in our day) and God's wrath. Believe me, as horrendous as man's cruelty to his fellow human beings can be, it is not even worth comparing to God's wrath. His anger will be poured out upon 1) those who have maltreated the Jews and Israel and 2)
those who have both rejected and mocked His Son Jesus Christ and our Lord’s achievement on Calvary’s cross.

We believe from Scripture that the next major prophecy to be fulfilled is THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH. Immediately or soon after the Church is caught up to be with the Lord, Antichrist will make his play to become the ruler of the world. He will usher onto this planet a SEVEN-YEAR PERIOD OF HORROR such as the world has never seen. It is called THE TRIBULATION.

This awful period will be divided into two primary sections, each lasting 3 ½ years: the Tribulation and the Great Tribulation. It is during this time that mankind will see and experience something most do not believe that God is capable of and that is His incredible ANGER. Ezekiel called it “God’s FURY” (Ezekiel 38 and 39).

The history of mankind has been a virtually unbroken record of rebellion against God. What you and I are witnessing right now, even here in America, is an escalating “thumbing of the collective nose” to God, His Word and His Son Jesus. No one should be shocked or surprised by what is going to happen for God has made it abundantly clear in His Word exactly what He plans to do here. (Of course one would have to READ the scriptures and BELIEVE them in order for the Word to have much bearing on his or her life.)

Here is the plan of God clearly stated by Dr. D. D. Pentecost in his classic book Prophecy for Today”

“How much longer (this present age) will continue we do not know for Scripture has not revealed to us the time when it will be terminated by the rapture of the Church, when the Lord Jesus will receive all resurrected saints and all translated, living saints unto Himself. After the rapture of the Church, there will be a brief period, seven years in duration, which we call the Tribulation. At the end of the Tribulation period, the Lord will come back to the earth personally and visibly. This is called the Second Advent or the Second Coming of Christ. At that time, He will institute a kingdom on the earth that will last for a thousand years, which we call the Millennial Kingdom.”

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Scripture divides the seven years into two halves: Daniel 9:27 And he (Antichrist) shall confirm the covenant (agreement) with many for one week (a week in prophetic scripture means 7 years): and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and
the oblation to cease (Antichrist breaks his word with the nations, primarily Israel), and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it (the earth) desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Scripture foretells the coming of a powerful world leaders who wins the nations because of his promises of peace on earth and his early virtually supernatural feats to win their confidence. Israel, in particular, will buy into his lies and accept his dictates - only to find that 3 ½ years later, Antichrist lies about everything and does everything within his power to destroy the Jews, Jerusalem and all Israel (not to mention the rest of the free world.).

Here we see the division of this 7-year period:

- Part 1 - 3 ½ years - the world revels in this personage in whom they have pledged their trust and support, Antichrist
- Part 2 - 3 ½ years - horrors beyond horrors as hell is unleashed on this planet, events so horrendous that God said if He did not sovereignly bring it to an end, no one on earth would be left alive.

Here how the Old Testament prophet Zephaniah described the tribulation:

Zeph. 1:12-18

"I will search with lanterns in Jerusalem's darkest corners to find and punish those who sit contented in their sins, indifferent to the Lord, thinking he will do nothing at all to them. [13] They are the very ones whose property will be plundered by the enemy, whose homes will be ransacked. They will never have a chance to live in the new homes they have built. They will never drink wine from the vineyards they have planted.

[14] "That terrible day of the Lord is near. Swiftly it comes—a day when strong men will cry bitterly. [15] It is a day when the Lord's anger will be poured out. It is a day of terrible distress and anguish, a day of ruin and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, of clouds, blackness, [16] trumpet calls, and battle cries. Down go the walled cities and strongest battlements!

[17] "Because you have sinned against the Lord, I will make you as helpless as a blind man searching for a path. Your blood will be poured out into the dust, and your bodies will lie there rotting on the ground."

[18] Your silver and gold will be of no use to you on that day of the Lord's anger. For the whole land will be devoured by the fire of his jealousy. He will make a terrifying end of all the people on earth."
Sounds terrifying, doesn’t it? Well - it IS terrifying. The Church is the Bride of Christ.

Now does this scenario sound like something that a loving Groom would bring about on
His Bride? Yet there are many today who teach and preach that the church will go
through the tribulation period.

They say, “But look - look at the martyrs down through the years! Look at those
believers who suffer today for their faith.” And I respond, “Yes, of course - but their
tormentors are just men, like themselves. Those believers are reaping the anger of men
and their governments or systems. BUT - IT IS NOT GOD’S WRATH THEY ARE
REAPING, IT IS MAN’S! And, believe me, there will be a vast difference!

John’s revelation of the end time gives us a shocking description of the horrors of the
tribulation. (Rev. 6:17) “The great day of His wrath is come.” (Rev. 14:10 and 19)
John refers to the “wine of the wrath of God” and “the winepress of the wrath of
God.” Note clearly it is the wrath of God, not of man, now sweeping the earth in the
tribulation.

How extensive is this suffering? (Rev. 16:19) All nations shall taste of the “cup of the
wine of the fierceness of His wrath.” So intense is the suffering that, according to Rev.
6:15-17: And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the
chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid
themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; [16] And said to the
mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the
throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: [17] For the great day of his wrath is
come; and who shall be able to stand?

Pentecost makes an insightful observation: “Here we find the greatest volume of prayer
that has ever gone up from the face of the earth is ascending, but it is not to Almighty
God. It is a plea and a prayer to the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and destroy
them.” (Ibid page 34)

It is vital here that we take a look at Revelation chapter 6 and see the scenario. In the
previous chapter, John saw (Rev. 5:7) Jesus take the mighty scroll of Judgment from the
hand of God, a scroll sealed with seven seals. What are those seals? Chapter 6 gives us
that information:

THE FOUR GHASTLY HORSE RIDERS OF THE APOCALYPSE  (Revelation)

Rev. 6:1-8

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the
noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. [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. [3] And when he had opened 
the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. [4] And there went out 
another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take 
peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given 
unto him a great sword. [5] And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the 
third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on 
him had a pair of balances in his hand. [6] And I heard a voice in the midst of the 
four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a 
 penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. [7] And when he had opened the 
fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. [8] And I looked, 
and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed 
with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill 
with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

SEAL NUMBER ONE - THE RISE TO POWER OF THE ANTICHRIST

Seal 1 is a rider on a white horse who carries a bow but no arrows. Antichrist will make 
his power grab on the “platform of peace.” Note, the saints of God (chapter 4) are 
already around the throne of God, praising and worshiping “Him Who sits upon the 
throne.” Antichrist does not arrive on the scene (though it’s possible he is already alive) 
until AFTER JESUS GETS HIS BRIDE, THE REDEEMED, OFF THE PLANET 
FIRST.

SEAL NUMBER TWO - WAR AGAINST ISRAEL

In verses 3 and 4 we see a rider on a red horse “to whom power was given to take peace 
from the earth.” This will be a horrendous war (not Armageddon) in which Israel is 
attacked by an amalgamation of Anti-Semitic nations:

Ezekiel 38:1-23

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, [2] Son of man, set thy face 
against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, (this is 
Russia) and prophesy against him, [3] And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold I 
am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: [4] And I will turn 
thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine 
army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a 
great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: [5] Persia 
(Iran), Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: [6]
Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah (basically, Turkey) of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee. [7] Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them.

[8] After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. [9] Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee. [10] Thus saith the Lord God; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: [11] And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; (why are these Israeli cities unarmed or unwalled? Because Israel has believed that Antichrist could bring peace to her and she has disarmed. This is a part of “the abomination of desolation” when Antichrist shows his true colors against the Jews) I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, [12] To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. [13] Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish (European nations that have turned their backs on Israel), with all the young lions (possibly a reference to the United States or the “West”) thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?

[14] Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord God; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? [15] And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: [16] And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes. [17] Thus saith the Lord God; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them? [18] And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel,

[saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up]
in my face. [19] For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; [20] So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth,
shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. [21] And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother. [22] And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. [23] Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they (Israel) shall know that I am the Lord.

It is out of this revelation of God in Israel that the 144,000 sealed Jewish witnesses (or evangelists) will come who take the Gospel to the whole world. (Rev. 7)

SEAL # 3 - WORLD-WIDE FAMINE

Rev. 6:5-6

And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. [6] And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of
wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

Much of our world currently knows the horror of famine. We in the United States don't know much about it. A recent New York Times article by Elisabeth Rosenthal informs us: *The world food supply is shrinking. There is a very serious risk that fewer people will be able to get food in the coming years.* At times, she reports, there is never much more than four to eight weeks of wheat and corn left in storage, based on world consumption levels. Therefore, a strong drought would be devastating to the food supply for the whole world. This will become a reality fairly early in the tribulation when the world's “then-Savior, Antichrist,” proves to be a woeful provider.

Remember, Jesus Himself, prophesied this: Matthew 24:4-7

*And Jesus answered and said unto them....there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.*

**SEAL # 4 - WORLD-WIDE DEATH**
Rev. 6:7-8

And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. [8] And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

Let this sink in: There are today about 7 billion people now living on this earth. Let’s just suppose that 3 billion would be taken in the Rapture (an inflated figure, I suspect). That would leave 4 billion people left on the earth following the church being taken to meet the Lord in the air. When Antichrist takes over, just during the first four seal judgments (with much more devastation, horror and death yet to come), verse 8 tells us one-fourth of the remaining earth’s population would die. That would be ONE BILLION people.

Now compare that to the devastation of World War II in which it is estimated that 50-60 MILLION people lost their lives. Many of us remember the sorrow of that period between 1939 and 1945. Many of us lost family members in the war. But as devastating as that period was, it is only a drop in the bucket to the first four seal judgments of Revelation 6.

SEALS # 5 AND 6

The fifth seal is opened and we see multitudes of Christian martyrs during the Tribulation.

Rev. 6:9

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

In the last century, there have been literally hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of our brothers and sisters who were killed for their faith in Christ - primarily by militant Muslims and rabid Hindus. Antichrist will escalate this horror many fold.

The sixth seal is destruction in the skies:

Rev. 6:12-14

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; [13] And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her
untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. [14] And the heaven departed as
a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of
their places.

The 7th seal judgment, described in Rev. 8:1 is a transition from the seal judgments to the
7 trumpet judgments (so called because each time an angel blows a trumpet in heaven, yet
another God-caused destruction slams planet earth and its people. This transition is
called “a half-hour of silence” in heaven, like the “calm before the storm.”

Small wonder then that Jesus warns us in Matthew 24:22: And except those days
should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those
days shall be shortened.

Who are the “elect?” I believe primarily this refers to Israel and the Jews, although one
might also consider those “tribulation saints,” those who commit their lives to Christ
during the tribulation.

The tribulation will last for seven years and will be ended by THE SECOND COMING
OF CHRIST, which we will study in our next get-together in two weeks.

REMEMBER THE TITLE OF THIS SERIES: “THE LAST GENERATION.” So far
we have studied only some of the “signs” Jesus indicated would take place before all
these things begin to happen. We are already seeing the proliferation of some of these
indicators. So how close are we to the end time?

Ask yourself: “Am I living in this last generation?” If so, how then should we live -
and how keenly we should be living for Christ and eternity!