

“What is God’s Purpose with the Tribulation?”

Daniel 9:24; Jer. 30; Rev. 6

When reading the Old Testament, we probably struggle understanding the prophets more than any other book. The prophets are not that difficult to understand. Prophets were sent by God to show Israel where they are disobeying God’s Laws (Ex-Deut) and warned Israel about exile should they persist in rebelling against God and disobeying His Word. They either warned the northern kingdom about exile to Assyria or the Southern Kingdom about exile to Babylon. Repent or exile. Most of the prophets spoke before the exiles (Pre-exilic) while a few (Haggai-Malachi) spoke to Israel after they returned to remind them that exile could happen again if they don’t repent again.

Yet, the prophets always had a message of hope with the warnings that said, ‘Even though you will go into exile, God will bring you back and one day you will experience His promised blessings in the land, at rest, and protected with the Messiah ruling. So when exiles ended they often looked for this hope. And even though it hasn’t happened yet, God has not changed His promises to bless a remnant of believing Israelites in their land enjoying peace when Messiah (Jesus) returns. God said this so emphatically that through Jeremiah He swore on oath saying,

31:37 This is what the LORD says: “Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done,” declares the LORD.

38 “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when this city will be rebuilt for me from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. 39 The measuring line will stretch from there straight to the hill of Gareb and then turn to Goah. 40 The whole valley where dead bodies and ashes are thrown, and all the terraces out to the Kidron Valley on the east as far as the corner of the Horse Gate, will be holy to the LORD. The city will never again be uprooted or demolished.”

And then we read in the next chapter, when the exile was well underway (Ch/ 32), God tells Jeremiah– as a test of his faith to see if Jeremiah believes this – is to buy land in Israel while Nebuchadnezzar is at Jerusalem’s door, ready to take them away. Yes Lord, I believe you will bring us back and return us after this difficult time.

The exiles and difficult times that preceded the historical returns were foreshadowing the one more, final, even a more terrible time than has ever-happened-period – called the Tribulation, or 70th week of Daniel or the Time of Jacob’s Trouble. What is God’s purpose in this seven-year period?

Last week we found out that this final 7 years will begin with a very charismatic, persuasive, world leader who convinces Israel that he will protect them from an angry world who wants to harm them, and this covenant will be a 7-year agreement. We also know that at the 3 ½ year mid point this ruler will reveal his true colours – he will claim to be the Messiah but he is not, he is the anti-Messiah – and now he will seek to annihilate every person who doesn’t believe him, in particular all Jews and all followers of Jesus. But at the end of that 7 years the true Messiah Jesus will return, defeat all His enemies, throw the antichrist in the lake of fire and set up His rule on earth.

Why does God allow this to happen especially if He is in control of the world? We need to go back to Daniel 9:24 when Gabriel told Daniel why God was making them wait longer because Israel was not ready to return to God; the whole purpose of exiles. Gabriel said,

²⁴ “Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

The reason why God allows this last 7 years to happen is strangely because

God Loves Israel and Wants Them to Repent **(9:24)**

Sadly, Israel did not repent as a nation and return to God after the Babylonian exile. We know that from reading Nehemiah and Ezra and the warnings by Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. And we know that from the gospel accounts because most of the nation rejected Jesus. So, its going to take this terrible seven-year tribulation before Israel finally repents

Of their rebellion against Him (Dan.9:24a; Jer. 30:1-7, 12-15; Rom. 11:25-27)

Gabriel lists 6 things God will accomplish when the 7-year tribulation is over. The first 3 all have to do with forgiving their sin of rebelling against Him. Here we’re not talking about an individual’s sin, we’re talking about national sin. This is what Daniel was praying for, that God would forgive Israel’s sin of rebelling against the One who created them from one man (Abraham), rescued them and gave them their land through Moses and Joshua and created a monarchical line through David, yet in spite of all these blessing they turned against God and His Word.

God will finish punishing them for ‘the transgression’ [means rebellion] at the end of the 7 years because those who survive the antichrist’s genocide will return to God. Jerusalem will be returned to Jesus’ control and once again become the center of God’s rule. “He will put an end to sin” is not a reference to no more sins anymore because that’s in eternity in glory. The word for ‘sins’ refers to general sinfulness. Israel’s behaviour would change drastically because of their repentance and belief. Their life will now consist of following the Lord. And ‘atone for wickedness’ is the application of receiving forgiveness once and for all. Israel rejected Jesus as their Messiah and participated in His crucifixion, which ironically made atonement available for them, but not until the end of the tribulation do they get it.

Paul understood this clearly as he says in

Rom. 11:25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. ²⁷ And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

Daniel prayed for Israel’s forgiveness and restoration. Gabriel tells Daniel that seventy sevens are decreed for “*your people [Israel] and your holy city [Jerusalem]*”. Not only will God forgive their sin of rebellion because they have repented, at the end of the 7 years Israel

Will receive what God has long promised (Jer. 30:8-11; 16-24)

⁸ “ ‘In that day,’ declares the LORD Almighty, ‘I will break the yoke off their necks and will tear off their bonds; no longer will foreigners enslave them.

⁹ *Instead, they will serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.*

¹⁰ “ ‘So do not fear, O Jacob my servant; do not be dismayed, O Israel,’ declares the LORD. ‘I will surely save

you out of a distant place, your descendants from the land of their exile. Jacob will again have peace and security, and no one will make him afraid.

¹¹ *I am with you and will save you,' declares the LORD. 'Though I completely destroy all the nations among which I scatter you, I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you but only with justice; I will not let you go entirely unpunished.'*

¹⁶ *"'But all who devour you will be devoured; all your enemies will go into exile. Those who plunder you will be plundered; all who make spoil of you I will despoil.*

¹⁷ *But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,' declares the LORD, 'because you are called an outcast, Zion for whom no one cares.'*

¹⁸ *"This is what the LORD says: "'I will restore the fortunes of Jacob's tents and have compassion on his dwellings; the city will be rebuilt on her ruins, and the palace will stand in its proper place.*

¹⁹ *From them will come songs of thanksgiving and the sound of rejoicing. I will add to their numbers, and they will not be decreased; I will bring them honor, and they will not be disdained.*

²⁰ *Their children will be as in days of old, and their community will be established before me; I will punish all who oppress them.*

²¹ *Their leader will be one of their own; their ruler will arise from among them. I will bring him near and he will come close to me, for who is he who will devote himself to be close to me?' declares the LORD.*

²² *"'So you will be my people, and I will be your God.'*

²³ *See, the storm of the LORD will burst out in wrath, a driving wind swirling down on the heads of the wicked.*

²⁴ *The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purposes of his heart. In days to come you will understand this.*

God has promised the land to Israel, to bring the Messiah back so they can enjoy His blessings in the land in peace. Don't spiritualize these verses into saying these promises are for the church. There are too many of these in God's Word. Let's believe that God will fulfill His promises just as He said.

Unfortunately its going to take this terrible 7-year period for Israel to finally return to God. God also has another purpose in the tribulation, for Gentiles who reject God and Jesus;

God Demonstrates His Righteousness By Bringing Judgment on the World (Matt. 24:29; Rev. 6)

God is holy and must deal with sin. God makes forgive-ness of sins available to anyone but so many reject Him. In the tribulation people will either believe God or follow the antichrist. The tribulation is ta call to repent. So in this final 7 years

The whole world will feel His wrath (Rev. 3:10)

There are many Old Testament prophecies about the Day of the Lord; another phrase that is used for the tribulation period. The 'day' is not just one day but this period of time when God pours out His wrath on the world who mostly have rejected Him. Jesus warned us through His message to the church of Philadelphia in Rev. 3:10

¹⁰ *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.*

I believe Rev. 6-19 describes the tribulation period and next week we'll get into it more. Rev. 6

describes the 7 seal judgments opened by Jesus. We read about a rider bent on war and death (vv.1-4), gross inflation and famines and plagues (vv.5-7), deaths of God's people (9-11), worldwide earthquakes and celestial signs (12-14). And then we read this in v.15

¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶ They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷ For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

People will recognize these things as the wrath of God but they refuse to repent. God never sends judgment without hope. The tribulation reveals God's righteousness in that

The whole world will hear the gospel (Rev. 7; 14:6-11)

God is going to miraculously save and seal for protection 144,000 Jewish evangelists who will be His witnesses during the tribulation. We read in 7:1

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. ² Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: ³ "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." ⁴ Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

Israel means Jews. We are told which tribes they come from. That's what it says; believe what it says. These are God's servants sent to do his will, sealed and protected from harm until God says enough, you've done your job. John has a glimpse into heaven and sees a multitude of saved people before the throne of God – no doubt there because of the ministry of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists. There's another way the gospel will be presented in that time. In Rev. 14:6-8 we read of three special angels who will have a very unique ministry;

⁶ Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. ⁷ He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water." ⁸ A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."

⁹ A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, ¹⁰ he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name."

How gracious is God to do this? How will people explain this away? It's a war time message; danger is coming, here is how you get to safety. This is what Jesus meant in Matt. 24:14

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

How else will God's righteousness be revealed at that time?

The whole world will know Jesus is Lord (Matt. 24:29-31)

²⁹ "Immediately after the distress of those days " 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'

³⁰ "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

No one will question who Jesus is on this day. The surviving Jews will turn to Him in repentance (Zech 12:10-13:3). The antichrist and false prophet will be thrown in the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20). And the judgment mentioned in Matt. 25:31-46 will take place.

One more purpose for the tribulation:

God Will Glorify Himself As Promised **(2 Thes. 1:5-10; Rom. 15:7-12)**

At this point the whole world will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God (Hab. 2:14). God has revealed how powerful and glorious He and His Son truly are. Everyone won't turn to God at this time but no one will not know who God is or Jesus Christ. This is what Paul refers to in two places:

^{2 Thes. 1:5} All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. ⁶ God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you ⁷ and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. ⁸ He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power ¹⁰ on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

^{Rom. 15:7} Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. ⁸ For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs ⁹ so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name."

¹⁰ Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."

¹¹ And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples."¹² And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him."

^{1 Pet. 4:7} The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. ⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

The study of end time events should change the way we live today based on what we know about the future. If we really believe these things will happen we should be in prayer consistently, more forgiving and caring, practicing hospitality and serving God with the gifts we have. Why? Because through these some will come to know Christ and through these we will grow in Christ and be more ready for our eternal home. This knowledge that we are learning about the future should change the way we live in the present.

2 Pet. 3:11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please
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