

## "The Tribulation and Revelation"

### *Daniel 9; Revelation 6-19*

Back in the spring, we spent 4 weeks looking at Bible prophecy trying to get our bearings on where we are now in God's prophetic timeline. The Book of Daniel provides the framework for God's prophetic timeline and Dan. 9 is foundational for understanding prophecy.

In the Book of Daniel, Daniel interprets the dreams or visions of Nebuchadnezzar (Ch. 2, 4) and Belshazzar (Ch. 5) while receiving his own dreams and visions in Ch. 7-12. All these dreams or visions have to do with details about future kingdoms. Babylon will be defeated by the Medes and Persians who will eventually be overthrown by Greece who will eventually lose to the Romans who will eventually re-emerge in the future under a consortium of 10 co-rulers, ultimately to be ruled by one ruler, whom Daniel describes as a beast.

In Daniel 9, Daniel prays to God that God forgive Israel's sin of rebellion against Him, restore Jerusalem, and return the exiles home. Why is he praying? Because the dreams are being fulfilled. The Medes and the Persians have defeated Babylon. It's been 68 years in captivity. Jeremiah 29 said it would last 70 years. Daniel believes prophecy is literal and prays that way.

God knows that Israel had not repented of their idolatry and had yet to return to Him in obedience. Gabriel tells Daniel it's going to take more than 70 years. It will take 70 x 7 years (490 years in total) before Israel is completely forgiven and restored and they are living in their land in peace. These 490 years are specifically focused on Israel and its capital Jerusalem "Your people and your holy city"

Gabriel said the 70 x 7 year period would begin with the issuing of *the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem*". This refers to Artaxerxes' decree to Nehemiah to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. The walls were rebuilt in 52 days but it would take almost 50 years before the city was rebuilt because of all the opposition to the Jews to rebuild (read Ezra & Nehemiah).

62 x 7 years later 'the Anointed One', Jesus comes. A day He Himself referred to as His triumphal entry in Luke 19:41, the day that Israel's leaders rejected Jesus as Messiah and plotted to kill Him. "After this" refers to an undisclosed period of time before the final 7 years and we're told a few things that will happen in this gap of time;

*the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed*

Jesus is crucified. The Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD. War will continue and desolations will happen until the end. The 'end' is this final 7 years. Since the first 69 x 7 years (483) happened literally and the events in between the 483<sup>rd</sup> year and the final 7 years have happened literally and are still happening today, the last 7 years are literal and they have yet to come. We have been living in this in-between time ever since. God has paused His program for the Jewish people and their 'holy city'. Now the church exists, the body of Christ made up of Gentile and Jewish believers, yet God's promises to Israel about them walking with God, living in their land in peace under the Messiah's rule will still happen.

This last 7 years is called the 'time of Jacob's trouble' or 'the Day of the Lord' or as we refer to it, the Tribulation. What do we know about these last 7 years from Daniel 9? We know that it begins with a 7-year covenant made by 'the ruler of the people who came'. Somehow this future ruler will have connections to a new Roman empire. This covenant will include Israel primarily because a temple must be rebuilt if sacrifices are again offered (v.27). The most likely scenario is Israel needs protection and is promised peace and protection with a temple in exchange for land? Technology? Natural gas?

In the middle of the 7 years, he will break this covenant and set up an abomination that causes desolation. The anti-messiah will follow the footsteps an earlier pre-Roman empire ruler who also hated Jews – Antiochus Epiphanes – who sacrificed a pig in the temple. The anti-Messiah will do something even more abominable, something even Jesus referred to in the future (Matt. 24:15).

However, his reign of terror will only last for 3 ½ more years and the 'end' will come. These 3 major events that we get from the book of Daniel regarding the 7-year future tribulation, will help us understand the book of Revelation.

Let's do a quick overview of Revelation. The apostle John was exiled to the island of Patmos in the mid 90's AD because of preaching the gospel. He received a vision of the resurrected Jesus in Ch. 1 who tells John to write down '*what he has seen, what is now and the things that will take place later.*' Ch. 1 is the introduction, and Ch.'s 2-3 are Jesus' 7 letters to the 7 churches of Asia Minor. In Ch.'s 4-5 John is taken into heaven where he sees the beginning of a vision of the things that will take place later. Here he sees Jesus take the 7-sealed scroll from God's hand, which reveal God's future outpouring of wrath on the world (6-19), a glimpse of Jesus' future rule (20), and the eternal New Jerusalem in Ch.'s 21-22.

In Ch.'s 6-19 we get details about the outpouring of the wrath of God as Jesus opens the scroll which I believe is the last seven years of the prophecy to Daniel. From Daniel 9:27 we know how the 7 years begin, what happens in the middle and how it ends. Let's see if Revelation 6-19 fits in that framework. We'll start with the easy part, the end.

In Rev. 19 John is given a glimpse into heaven where he sees and hears loud praising and rejoicing because the anti-christ's evil empire has crumbled (Rev. 17-18). He hears in 19:6

*<sup>6</sup> Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. <sup>7</sup>Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. <sup>8</sup> Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)*

I believe you and I along with all raptured and deceased believers (His bride) in Jesus are enjoying the meal He said at the Last Passover that He was looking forward to enjoying with us. Then John sees Jesus return with us, His army, to bring an end to the anti-messiah's rule:

*<sup>11</sup> I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. <sup>13</sup> He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. <sup>14</sup> The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. <sup>15</sup> Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. <sup>17</sup> And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of*

*God, <sup>18</sup>so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great.”*

*<sup>19</sup>Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. <sup>20</sup>But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. <sup>21</sup>The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.*

Clearly, this is the end of the beast, both Daniel and Revelation's term for the anti-messiah. Jesus returns; on a white horse, a symbol of victory. He makes war but it is just. On His head are many diadems (Greek); diadems refer to a king's crown. The multitude of crowns refers to all that He is rightful king over. Out of His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. This is a romphaia, a large broad sword that strikes in large swaths, as opposed to a macharia, a dagger that works in close range, one on one. Jesus clearly defeats the nations and establishes the fact that He is indeed King of kings and Lord of Lords. That's how the 7 years end.

How do the seven years begin? As Jesus unravels the scroll in Rev. 6 He sees a rider on a white horse as well! He too has a crown – and a weapon and he is bent on conquering. It makes sense if this is describing how the 7 years begin with the anti-messiah making himself look like the Messiah. He has risen to power so he has secured numerous victories. How? With a bow. Not a broad sword but individual victories. He is given a crown, a stephanos, not a diadem. A stephanos is an earned crown. You defeated someone to earn this reward. And he is bent on conquest. He is not finished.

Unlike Jesus, the anti-messiah will continue to seek to conquer those who have yet to come under his rule. Jesus will defeat all His enemies in one broad stroke and establish His rule in peace with those who want His rule for His life. At the end of Rev. 19 the false messiah and his spokesperson the false prophet are thrown in the lake of fire where they will remain forever.

The next three seals describe what will happen in the early stages of the tribulation through 3 more horses. War, death, famine, inflation and in vv.9-11 the deaths of those who reject the anti-messiah as their king and die as a result. As Daniel 9 points out, the last 7 years begin with the anti-messiah's rise to power but ultimately ends with the true Messiah, Jesus, returning and ending his tyrannical reign. This is a strong argument that Rev. 6-19 describes the continual unfolding of God's wrath being poured out on the world, for these 7 years. The seal judgments are followed by trumpet judgments which are then followed by bowl judgments, each time things get worse.

However, along the way, the action is paused to explain something that needs more detail or background information. Like Rev. 7, 11-13. In Rev. 7 there is a delay before opening the 7<sup>th</sup> seal. John hears an angel calling to other angels not to harm the earth until 144,000 Jews are sealed by God to serve Him, who will lead thousands to faith in Christ, to which John is given a glimpse of them worshipping God in heaven. Why here? Since the last 7 years will focus on Israel and Jerusalem, and if we the church have been raptured prior to the tribulation, then these miraculously saved and sealed 144,000 Jewish witnesses to take the gospel to their own people and as many as will listen.

Daniel 9 also told us we know what happens in the middle of the tribulation. This anti-messiah will make himself out to be the Messiah and perform some kind of abomination that causes desolation. For that we turn to Rev. 11-13. As we begin Rev. 11 John is told to go measure the temple and the altar there. A temple in the tribulation agrees with Daniel 9. Now in v.2 we read that it

will be trampled by Gentile for 42 months. 42 months is 3 ½ years. This is not the last reference we have to half of the seven years. As Daniel said there are two distinct parts to the 7-year tribulation.

In Ch. 12 John is shown in vision why the anti-messiah is coming. Simply because Satan the dragon hates God and tries to destroy God's plan through Jesus to save the nation of Israel. Satan, the dragon, tried to kill the woman who gave birth to a male child. The woman is not Mary but Israel, described as in Joseph's dream in Gen. 37, Jacob the sun, Rachel the moon, 12 sons as 12 stars, one of whom will rule over the others. Satan failed to kill Jesus at birth, who is snatched back up to God (resurrection). Now Satan pursues the woman (Israel) to destroy her once and for all but God protects her for 1260 days (which is 3 ½ years). Further explained in 12:14 as the woman being protected for a time, times and half a time (again, 3 ½ years).

Ch. 13 explains how the anti-messiah makes a bold move at the midpoint of the tribulation and turns against Israel in the last 3 ½ years. In 13:1-4 we read descriptions of the anti-messiah right out of Daniel 7 and 11 prophecies about him. People worship the dragon (Satan) because of the beast (13:4)

*<sup>5</sup> The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. <sup>6</sup> He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. <sup>7</sup> He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. <sup>8</sup> All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. <sup>9</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear. .. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.*

Why will people worship him? What has changed that he now pursues with vengeance anyone does not worship him? V. 11 explains:

*<sup>11</sup> Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. <sup>12</sup> He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. <sup>13</sup> And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. <sup>14</sup> Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. <sup>15</sup> He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. <sup>16</sup> He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, <sup>17</sup> so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. <sup>18</sup> This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.*

Forcing people to worship him is to declare anti-messiah as the Messiah and God is the abomination of desolation.. Many will finally have their eyes opened and flee. Many will die. While the anti-messiah turns up his fury on Israel and anyone who has turned to Christ in this time, God turns up His own wrath and unleashes the final bowl judgments on the new Babylonian empire the anti-messiah has been running and increasing terrible disasters on the earth.

Revelation is explained best understood through the Old Testament framework already given to us in Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel and especially Daniel. While we may not be able to figure it all out, we can clearly see from Daniel 9:27 the beginning of the tribulation starting in Rev. 6, the middle of the tribulation and abomination of desolation in Rev. 11-13 and the end in Ch. 19. But as much as it is helpful for us to understand these things intellectually, there's a more important application.

Why does God give so much detailed information about the last 7 years? For us, to know now that everything God promises comes true. And for the people who will be living then will understand completely why the world is falling apart. Listen to these warnings in Ch. 13,

<sup>9</sup> *He who has an ear, let him hear.*

*This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.*

<sup>18</sup> *This calls for wisdom.*

The closer we get to Jesus' return the more information God unveils because He is compassionate, full of grace, and slow to anger. He even tells us how this starts and that it will only last 7 years. That these things will happen in the first 3 ½ years, then expect this to happen at the midpoint then expect everything to go downhill from there. God is saying, I don't want you to die without knowing Me and My Son. I said these things will happen; please repent and choose to believe Me before it's too late.

We are seeing things today we could have never even imagined. People changing sexes and thinking this is good. People shout with pride and joy they have the right to kill their own babies in their wombs. Every form of media uses lies to give us their spin on what is happening. A total disrespect for world leaders. God could and can bring a revival anytime, - we need to pray for that. But we also know the world is going to be worse before Jesus returns. I'm not usually this gloomy or dramatic, but I think we need a wake-up call. People need the Lord. We need to be more bold about sharing the gospel. The world we live in right now is completely ripe for a suave, charismatic political leader to sway them into thinking he has all the answers, just follow me. No, follow Jesus.