

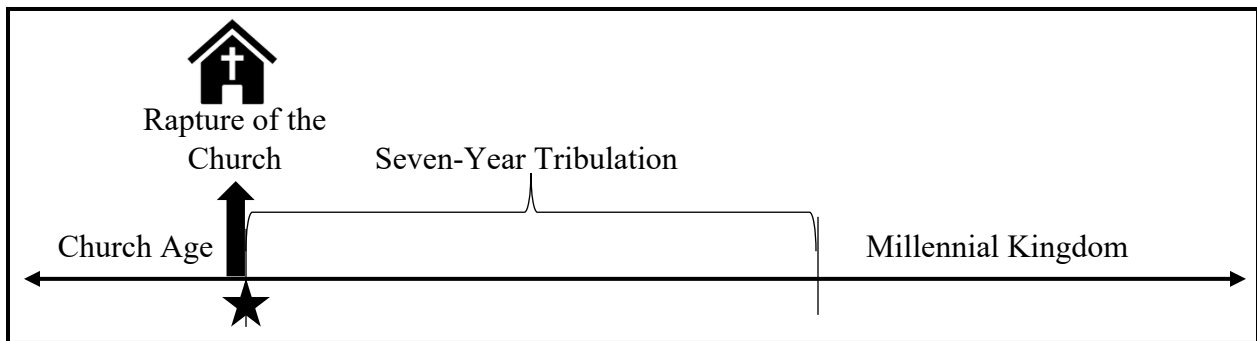


Eschatology – A Study of the End Times

Lesson 12: The Beginning of the Tribulation, Part 1

Introduction

As we have studied so far, the next event to take place in the chronological timeline of end times events is the rapture of the church. The church will be taken to heaven to be with Christ where she will be protected from the wrath of God that will be unleashed in the seven-year tribulation period. In this lesson we will look at what will take place at the beginning of the tribulation period.



The Antichrist Signs a Covenant¹

The Bible teaches that there is one event that starts the seven-year tribulation period. This event is the antichrist's signing of a covenant with Israel. This is seen in Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks in Daniel 9.

The Timetable of Daniel 9

God has provided a prophetic timetable for the nation of Israel in Daniel 9:24–27. The prophetic clock began ticking when the command went out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem following its destruction by Babylon. According to this passage, Israel's timetable was divided into 70 groups of 7 years, totaling 490 years.

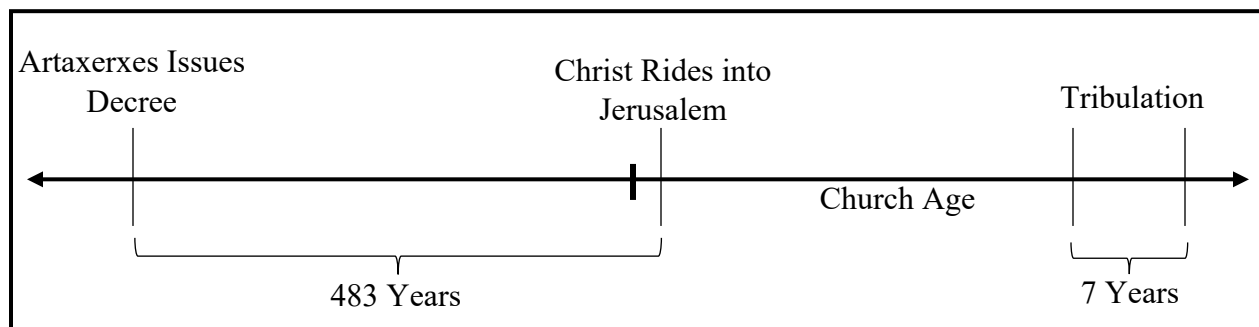
¹ The following is adapted from *The End Times in Chronological Order* by Ron Rhodes.

The Calculation

Daniel 9:24 says, “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*.”

A Hebrew lexicon defines the word “weeks” (*shava'im*) as “a week of years, a period of seven years.”² Therefore, we conclude that one week equals seven years.

- Daniel 9:24. Seventy weeks have been decreed for Israel and Jerusalem. Seventy times seven years equals 490 years.
- Daniel 9:25. Seven weeks and sixty-two weeks equals 69 weeks. This counted the “issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince.” Sixty-nine weeks equals 483 years.
- King Artaxerxes issued the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem 483 years before Jesus the Messiah rode into Jerusalem on a donkey proclaiming that He was Israel’s Messiah.
- At that point God’s prophetic clock stopped.
- Daniel 9:26. Daniel describes a gap between these 483 years and the final seven years (or “one week”). During this time gap, Daniel’s prophecy tells us there are three things that will happen.
 1. The Messiah will be killed (“the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing”).
 2. The city of Jerusalem and its temple will be destroyed (“and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary”). This occurred in AD 70.
 3. The Jews would then encounter difficulty and hardship from that time forward (“And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.”).
- Daniel 9:27. The final “one week” of seven years will begin for Israel when the antichrist signs a seven-year contract. This event will start the seven-year tribulation.



² Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2001), 1384.

The Day of the Lord

The signing of the covenant with Israel constitutes not only the beginning of the tribulation period, but also the beginning of the day of the Lord. The term *day of the Lord* is used in several ways in Scripture. The Old Testament prophets sometimes used it to describe an event to be fulfilled in the near future. At other times, they referred to an event that would occur in the distant eschatological future. The context in which the prophets used this term generally indicates what meaning is intended. Both uses of the term characterized God’s supernatural intervention in order to bring judgment against sin. The day of the Lord is a time in which God actively controls and dominates history in a direct way instead of working through secondary causes.

In the New Testament, the term is generally used of the judgment that will occur during the seven-year tribulation period as well as judgment that will occur after the millennial kingdom before the new earth is ushered in.

There are a number of passages that indicate the day of the Lord has not taken place but awaits the end times.

- Isaiah 34:1–8. Who is God’s indignation against? _____

- Zechariah 14:1–3; 12–15. Who is going to fight against all the nations? _____

- 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11. What does Paul say about the day of the Lord? _____

Because the antichrist’s signing of the covenant with Israel begins the tribulation period, we can also say that this signing of the covenant begins the eschatological day of the Lord.

The Rise of the Antichrist

The apostle John describes the antichrist as “the beast” in Revelation 13. Paul refers to him as a “man of lawlessness” in 2 Thessalonians 2. Although sin and lawlessness are already rampant in our day, Paul tells us that a day will come when there will be a specific individual who will come into power and be the embodiment of sin and lawlessness. However, he won’t appear as an evil, wicked dictator at first. Instead, he will deceive many people.

- 2 Thessalonians 2:9–10. What will the antichrist do? _____

- Daniel 8:23; Revelation 13:5. How is the antichrist described? _____

- Revelation 13:16–17. What do these verses reveal about the antichrist’s economic acumen? _____

- Revelation 6:2, 13:2. What do these verses reveal about the antichrist’s military ability? _____

- Daniel 11:36; Revelation 13:8. What will the antichrist think about himself? _____

- Revelation 17:12–13. What will the antichrist’s political influence be like? _____

Although the antichrist initially appears to be benevolent with his covenant that he makes with Israel, his true colors will come out as the tribulation period unfolds. He will seek to dominate the world, adopt an anti-God agenda, seek to destroy the Jews, persecute believers, and set up his own kingdom on earth. He will speak arrogant and boastful words in glorifying himself.

The antichrist will also have an assistant, the false prophet, who will seek to make the world worship the antichrist (Rev. 13:11–12). At the beginning of the tribulation the antichrist will be a great deceiver who will seek to make peace, but he will then reveal himself for who he really is—a man of lawlessness.

Application

1. Although we are told in Scripture about the antichrist, we are not to be looking for him. Instead, we are to be looking for Christ!
2. Rejoice and be thankful that we, as the church, will escape the day of the Lord because of the rapture.
3. The antichrist can only mimic Christ. He does not have ultimate power or sovereignty over the world, only our Lord and Savior does. Don’t fear, trust in the one who has all power and authority!