



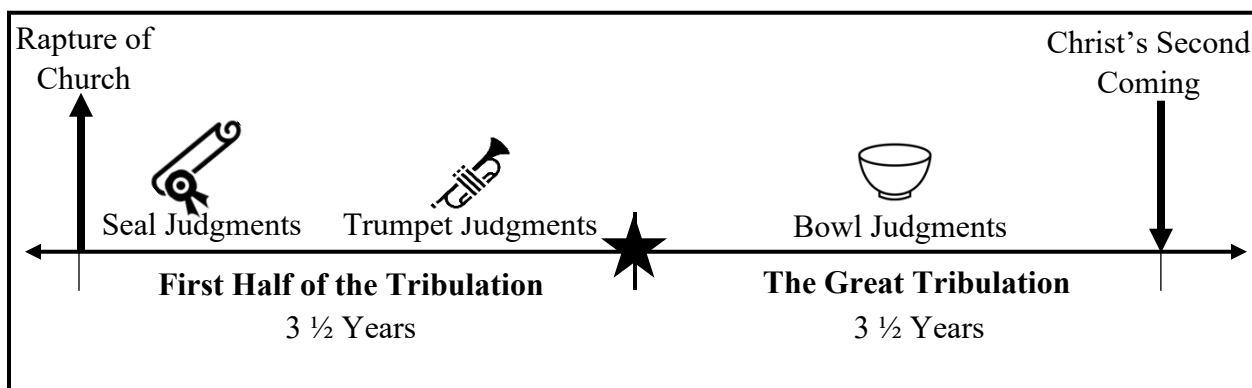
Eschatology – A Study of the End Times

Lesson 16: The Seven Year Tribulation Period, Part 3

Introduction

So far in our study of the seven-year tribulation period, we have looked at the events that will take place in the first half of the tribulation. We have seen the seal judgments, the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, the trumpet judgments, and the two witnesses. As we continue to look at the future seven-year tribulation period, we will be looking at the midpoint of the tribulation (see star below). At this point, the seven bowl judgments have not yet been poured out. However, things are going to change drastically as it will begin what is often called “the great tribulation.”

Timeline of Tribulation Judgments



Satan Is Cast Out of Heaven

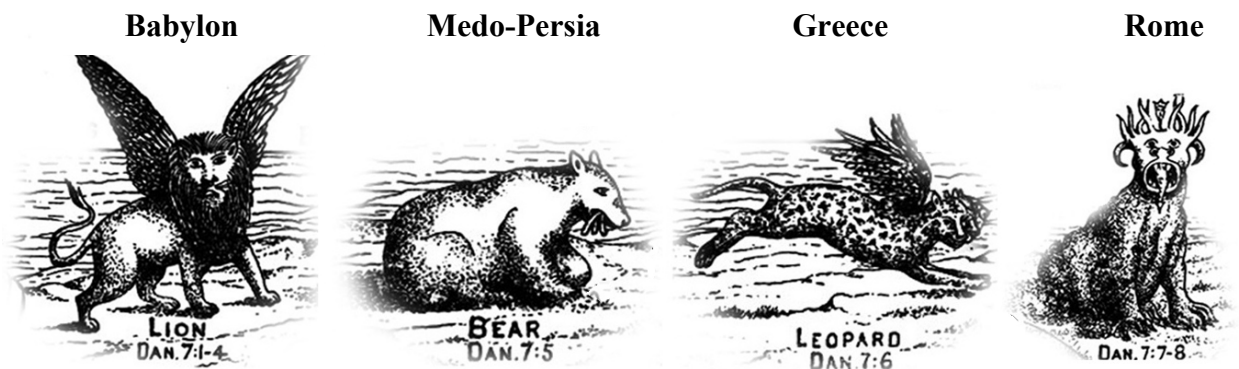
In Revelation 12:7–9, there is a war in heaven between Michael and his angels who wage war with the dragon, who is Satan (verse 9). Satan starts the war as the Greek construction of verse 7 could be translated, “Michael and his angels had to fight the dragon.” The Bible does not reveal how angels fight, and it would not do us any good to speculate. Michael and his angels will overpower Satan and his demons and cast them out of heaven and down to earth. However, heaven’s cleansing is earth’s contamination. Satan will unleash his fury upon humanity in one final attempt to overthrow God. His full power will be directed primarily at anyone who belongs to God. Revelation 12:12 says, “For this reason, rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you with great wrath,

knowing that he has *only* a short time.” This great wrath, which will only last for a short time, will provide the basis for an intensification of events upon the earth during the second half of the tribulation. A key figure whom Satan will use during this last three and a half years will be the antichrist.

The Identification of the Antichrist

The antichrist is going to play a big part in the tribulation period. He is going to rise to power and even demand worship of himself at the midpoint of the tribulation (Rev. 13:15). But who will the antichrist be?

To answer this question, we must understand the identity of the four beasts in Daniel 7. In this vision Daniel sees four beasts which represent four kingdoms. The first beast is Babylon, the second beast is Medo-Persia, and the third beast is Greece. In verse 7, Daniel sees a vision of the fourth beast who was “dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth.” It also had ten horns, which represent ten kings. This fourth beast is the Roman Empire which overthrew the Grecian Empire. In verse 8, Daniel sees “another horn, a little one” who came up among the ten horns. This “little horn” is the antichrist who most conservative scholars believe will be the ruler of a revived Roman Empire.



Daniel 7:8 also says, “this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great *boasts*.” Since we conclude that “this horn” is the antichrist and Daniel tells us about his eyes and a mouth, we know that the antichrist will be a man.

The Death and Resurrection of the Antichrist

In Revelation 13, we are told that after Satan is cast down to earth from heaven (Rev. 12:7–9), he will give his power, throne, and authority to the antichrist (Rev. 13:2). However, the antichrist will be killed during this time. He won’t stay dead for long as the dragon (Satan) will resurrect the antichrist. This will cause the whole world to be amazed and worship both Satan and the antichrist (Rev. 13:3–4).

The Antichrist Breaks His Covenant

In Daniel 9:24–27, we are told about seventy weeks that have been decreed. From the time of the restoration of Jerusalem until the arrival of the Messiah, there will be sixty-nine weeks, which

have already been fulfilled. There is still one week remaining which will be fulfilled by the seven-year tribulation that is to come after the rapture of the church. At the beginning of the tribulation there will be a covenant signed between the antichrist and Israel. We know the antichrist will sign this covenant because verse 26 tells us the signer will be “the prince who is to come.” As the covenant maker, the antichrist will be the head of a revived Roman Empire (Dan. 7:8).

Daniel 9:27 tells us that the antichrist “will make a firm covenant with the many for one week.” This week, which is the seven years of the tribulation, will be the duration of the antichrist’s rule. However, in the middle of the week, the antichrist will break the covenant he made with Israel and will cause Israel’s temple sacrifices to cease. Verse 27 says, “but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering.” In other words, the covenant that has been in effect for three and a half years will be broken by the antichrist.

Why put a stop to the sacrifices? The key reason is that near the midpoint of the tribulation, the antichrist will have already attained political power but will now seek to assume religious power as well. He will seek to cause the world to worship him (2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:8, 15). For him to be worshiped, he will have had to destroy all competing religions on the earth. This will be his attempt to destroy the Jewish religion with its sacrifices and offerings at the midpoint of the tribulation.

The False Prophet Arises

In John’s vision in Revelation 13:11, he sees “another beast” who comes up out of the earth. This beast is different from the beast in Revelation 13:1 (the antichrist) as this beast makes the earth dwellers worship the beast of verse 1 (the antichrist). The beast of verse 11 is also known as “the false prophet” (Rev. 16:13; 19:20) who will arise at the midpoint of the tribulation.

The false prophet will be given authority and empowered by Satan to perform great signs such as calling fire to come down out of heaven (Rev. 13:13). This sign is very similar to what the two witnesses were able to do in Revelation 11. The false prophet uses these signs to induce people to worship, not Christ, but Satan’s substitute for Christ—the antichrist. The false prophet will erect an image of the beast in the temple for the people of the earth to worship (Rev. 13:14).

The false prophet, who will deceive the world in worship of the antichrist, will have the ability to make the image of the beast come alive. There is debate on whether the image actually comes to life or if this is only an impression of the image being alive. Some believe that with the advancement of technology and the capability of making robots seem realistic, that it will only be an impression of being alive. Others believe that the false prophet will give breath (*pneuma*) to the image so that it actually comes alive to speak and to kill those who do not worship it (Rev. 13:15). Whatever the false prophet does to this image, it will cause people to be deceived and worship the antichrist, as that will be the goal of the false prophet.

The Abomination of Desolation Event

While the antichrist will start off being Israel’s protector, he will become Israel’s persecutor after the first three and a half years of the tribulation. One of the things he will do is defile Israel and

the temple by setting up an image of himself in the Jewish temple. Scripture calls this “the abomination of desolation” (Dan. 11:31; 12:11; Matt. 24:15; cf. Dan. 9:27).

Daniel 11:31 tells us about the antichrist’s tactics and says, “Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation.” The New Testament gives further clarity on this event when the “man of lawlessness . . . exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God” (2 Thess. 2:3–4).

The question that often arises is, does the antichrist sit in the temple or is it an image of him that is placed in the temple? Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 that he “takes his seat in the temple of God.” Jesus says in Matthew 24:15 that he is “standing in the holy place.” Revelation 13:14–15 speaks of “the image of the beast.” The antichrist will go into the temple and declare himself to be God and take his seat in the temple. This will clearly be an abominable act to the Jews. However, because he will be out fighting wars and suppressing people, he will not be able to stay in the temple. Therefore, he will commission the false prophet to establish an image of himself in the temple where it will remain standing for the people to worship (Rev. 13:14). The false prophet will even have the ability to cause the image of the antichrist to come alive and deceive all those who worship it.

The abomination of desolation will last for 1,290 days (Dan. 12:11) when Christ comes and destroys the antichrist and the false prophet and throws them into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20).

Application

1. Beware of false prophets. We must understand that there are and will be false prophets who will seek to lead you astray. Stay in the Word of God so that you will know the truth and be able to discern and identify false prophets.
2. Trust God’s perfect plan. Just as things will get bad in the tribulation, things may get bad in our lives as well. Trust that God is still on His throne working out His perfect plan.
3. Be thankful. Thank God that we will be saved from the tribulation to come because of His promise to rapture us, His church (1 Thess. 4:13–18).