

The Great Tribulation

As Described by Jesus, the Christ

Matthew 24:21

Matthew 24:21

- 21 *“For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.*
- 22 *Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”*

In verse 9, JESUS CHRIST noted that in the first 3 ½ years would be a tribulation but he called the second period ‘the great tribulation’. It would be the most difficult years of all human history.

So people listen to the words of your Savior, no matter how bad, how difficult things may get in the world, they are nothing to be compared with the last half of The Tribulation.

Note how verse 21 begins:

for then [the Greek translated] *for* [explains the need of urgency to get out of Jerusalem in verses 15-20; and the temporal

adverb] *then* [is used to explain that the following years will be the worst ever. If they do not heed the words by JESUS CHRIST to] *flee to the mountains* [they will be caught in this most horrible period of history. It is always to your advantage to know the Word of God and live according to it.]

As to the term 'tribulation' Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost, in his great book ***Things to Come*** makes the following point:
"the term tribulation is used in several different ways in Scripture, it is used in a non-technical, non-eschatological* (*future)sense in reference to any time of suffering or testing into which one goes.

It is so used in Matthew 13:21; Mark 4:17; John 16:33; Romans 5:3; 12:12; 2 Corinthians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; Revelation 1:9.

It is used in its technical or eschatological sense in reference to the whole period of the seven years of Tribulation, as in Revelation 2:22 or Matthew 24:29. It is also used in reference to the last half of this seven year period, as in Matthew 24:21.

There are specific references to the Great Tribulation in the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 4:30

“When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice.

Jeremiah 30:7

‘Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob’s distress, But he will be saved from it.

Daniel 12:1

“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

Zephaniah 1:14-17

- 14 *Near is the great day of the LORD, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly.*
- 15 *A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,*
- 16 *A day of trumpet and battle cry Against the fortified cities
And the high corner towers.*
- 17 *I will bring distress on men So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against the LORD; [rejection of Jesus as the Messiah-Savior] And their blood will be poured out like dust And their flesh like dung.*

Matthew 24:21

“For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.

What is The Great Tribulation?

1. The Great Tribulation is the last 3 ½ years of the tribulational period after the rapture of the Church.
2. The Great Tribulation begins with the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation and will end with the Return of JESUS CHRIST and the battle of Armageddon.
3. Because it is called The ‘Great Tribulation’ by our Lord, some have concluded that the rapture of the Church will occur in the middle of the Tribulation, known as ‘mid-tribulationist’.
 - a. The primary problem with this view is that the entire seven years of The Tribulation is really the last 7 years promised to Israel.

- b. God promised Israel 490 year.
Daniel 9:24 *Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people* that is 490 years. (7 x 70 years)
- c. The counting of these 490 years began *at the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince* Daniel 9:25
- d. But Messiah would be cut off leaving one week or seven years.
- e. This 7 years (or one week) is the seven years of The Tribulation; these are really seven years of the Age of Israel and have nothing to do with the Church. So the Church is removed or raptured or snatched up and the last week God promised to Israel will take place and the church has nothing to do with Israel.
- f. The seven years called The Tribulation should really be known as the last 7 years of the 490 years God promised to Israel. Since they are filled with tribulation and The Great Tribulation.

We call these 7 years, The Tribulation, but again, they should be known as the 7 years of the age of Israel.

G. It is most unfortunate but while this is the age of Israel, an unprecedented number of Jews will be killed during these times.

4. While two other New Testament passages use the phrase 'great tribulation, they are not referring to these last seven years. (Acts 7:11; and Revelation 2:22) One other passage refers to these last three and 1/2 years of the 490 years promised to Israel by God, as 'The Great Tribulation'

Revelation 7:14

I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

5. Description of the Great Tribulation.

Matthew 24:21 Jesus Himself said of this period of history.

such as had not occurred since the beginning of the world and never will be after this Great Tribulation.

In Mark 13:19

“For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will.

6. What is interesting is that while this is the greatest tribulation in all history, it will mark two decisive tribulations:
 1. It will be the worst period of tribulation and death for the Jews. It will excel all the horrors of the holocaust under Nazi Germany.
 2. It will also be most disastrous for all Gentiles and end with the ending Times of the Gentiles.
Luke 21:24

7. A careful study of Revelation, chapter 6 through chapter 19 reveals that in a short time of The Great Tribulation, hundreds of millions of people die violent deaths. Daniel 7:25, Daniel 12:7 and Revelation 12:14 reveal to us that the anti-Christ will bring about unbelievable death and torment on the earth for ‘a time, times and half a time’ or 3 ½ years.
8. What is interesting is that in most of these prophetic passages the time of The Great Tribulation will end in the redemption of the Jewish remnant.

We will see that Jesus will make this clear
in Matthew 24:29

- 29 *“But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*
- 30 *“And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the*

*SON OF MAN COMING ON THE
CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and
great glory,*

31 *“And He will send forth His angels with A
GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL
GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the
four winds, from one end of the sky to the
other.*

How bad are the days of The Great Tribulation?

Matthew 24:22

*“Unless those days had been cut short, no
life would have been saved; but for the sake
of the elect those days will be cut short.*

As we examine these words by our Lord in describing the last 3 ½ years of The Great Tribulation, **we learn more about our God; and we see Divine Love in action.** Remember the fundamental characteristic of Divine Love and Spiritual Love is **Love observes! Love sees a need and meets that need.**

God saw a world lost and headed for eternity separated from God in a lake of fire. So the Love of God did the only thing He could do even though it demanded the most, He gave His Son:

John 3:16 *For God so loved...*

*“For God so loved the world,
that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whoever believes in Him shall not perish,
but have eternal life.*

And now in Matthew 24:22 God looks down and **His love sees** the world in a real mess, ready to destroy itself. So God divinely moves in such a way as to *cut short* the last 3 ½ years of The Tribulation.

**This is our God
this is what our God is like
His love sees a need in your life
and He acts to your advantage**

Romans 8:28

And we know [through the study of His Word]
that God causes all things to work together

for good to those who love God, [the only way we can love God is by the love as a fruit of the Holy Spirit so we have to know how to be Filled with the Holy Spirit: by grace through faith in the Holy Spirit] to those who are called according to His purpose. [born again believers...the elect.]

As we examine verse 22 we find three areas of

Divine Sovereignty:

1. **Cutting short the days**
2. **No life would be saved and**
3. **What does it mean**

for the sake of the elect?

And who are *the elect*?

Matthew 24:22

“Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”

What does this mean?

And be careful how you answer this question?

Does this mean that God will cut the last 3 ½ years short?

Does this mean that God will shorten The Great Tribulation to less than 3 ½ years?

If He does so;

if God does shorten the last half of The Tribulation to less than the 1,260 days He promised in Revelation 11:3 and 12:6...

If He does;

if God does make the last 3 ½ shorter, then God is a liar!

God does not keep His Word! And to declare God does not keep His Word is blasphemy!

For God cannot lie

Numbers 23:19

“God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”

No, my friends, God will not make the seven promised years to Israel, short of those promised 7 year.

Hebrews 6:17-19

- ¹⁷ *In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise [descendants of Abraham and the Abrahamic promise] the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,*
- ¹⁸ *so that by two unchangeable things [Promise and Oath from God] in which it is impossible for God to lie, we [Church Age believers] who have taken refuge [in the promise of the gospel] would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us: **Eternal Life***

Wuest ***God's promise and God's oath is a strong army or fortress against doubt or discouragement***

- ¹⁹ *This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, [Jesus Christ]*

Sure [cannot falter, cannot be torn down,]
steadfast [you can build on it, you can build your
life on the anchor of God's faithfulness!]

Titus 1:2

*in the hope of eternal life, which God, who
cannot lie, promised long ages ago, [and on
this you can anchor your life, you have found an
anchor for your soul.]*

So if this does not mean that He has **not** cut short the 3 ½ years
of The Great Tribulation, then what does it mean?

Without getting too heavy laden in Greek grammar you have a
hint in the NASB.

“Unless those days had been cut short,

Problem: some, poor interpreters of the Word of God, just say
that the promised, divinely decreed 1260 days were cut short by
God. I hope you realize what this would do or say about the
essence of God; Namely that God does not keep His word or His
promise, and this puts our own eternal salvation in jeopardy.

So what does the phrase, *unless those days had been cut short* mean?

- 1 Mark adds to what Matthew records, in that it is the Lord who shortened the days: Mark 13:20 “*Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days.*” In both Matthew and Mark the verb *had shorten* are Aorist Indicatives. The verb is used in the New Testament to shorten the number of days.
- 2 A study of ‘**Biblical Greek**’ by Maximilian ZA study of ‘**Biblical Greek**’ by Maximilian Zwick (Latin) English edition adapted from the fourth Latin edition by **Joseph Smith**; pages 107-109 shows that WHEN THE AORIST TENSE IS WITH THE INDICATIVE MOOD it refers to the eschatological future, where the AORIST refers to the prophetic past to represent the future.

What does this mean?

Simply that this construction refers to action by God in the past that affects the future from the time of writing.

God made a decision in Eternity Past that directly affects the future.

- 3 *had been cut short* in the past with future reference.

- 4 *cutting short* in both Matthew and Mark refers to decisions by God in the past in the doctrine of Divine Decrees where God in **ETERNITY PAST** laid out His plan for the future of all human history.
- 5 This means that when God decided that He would promise Israel 490 years, He had in His plan that the final week of seven years would be just that, “seven years and no more,” otherwise in His Omniscience He knew it was going to be so bad that man would have destroyed all mankind, and that was not going to be the end of time according to His plan.

He plans on the earth being here another 1000 years for the millennial reign of His Son.

- 6 So what is Jesus Christ saying?
And why does He word it this way?

JC words it this way to draw attention to the fact that God is in total control, He is directing our attention to the Sovereignty of God and the Omniscience of God.

God knew that if the days of **The Great Tribulation** were to go on further than 3 ½ years, man would destroy himself. We hear a great deal **today** how man is going to destroy the earth and himself; with nuclear bombs or by destroying

the clement. But you can now rest with inner-peace, man is not going to destroy himself or this earth.

The Sovereign Omniscient, Omnipotent God will not allow this to happen.

He has worked all this out in Eternity Past in the doctrine of Divine Decrees.

Matthew 24:22

“Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”

Unless The Greek construction intro. a second class condition of **unreality** that is –what is now presented is not reality, the days were cut short

The **protasis** setting up the condition: *unless those days had been cut short*, now the **apodasis**, the climax, the main clause: *no life would have been saved*.

What does this last phrase mean?

no life would have been saved

First this is not speaking of eternal life salvation but to deliverance through these 3 ½ years of unprecedented horrible days in human history.

This is a Hebrew idiom as shown from Genesis 9:11

“I God establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.”

Have you ever heard the expression: **burning down the barn to get rid of the rats?** Well, this is how Satan views all Jews as *rats* in his kingdom of darkness and in The Great Tribulation he is ready to destroy the whole earth to get rid of Jews.

why?

Because Satan’s objective is to keep God’s word in His covenants to Israel from ever being fulfilled and if there are no Jews on earth, then God cannot keep His promises to Israel, and therefore, God is not God!

But **God is all that deity** entails including His plan for all human history.

What is your view of God?

but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Who are the **Elect**?

And **why**?

- 1 First the word itself refers to all those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior.
God made a decision in Eternity Past that everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as Savior, He elects them to Eternal Life with Himself—that is eternity with God the Father.
- 2 While this word is used to describe believers in the Church, this cannot be the reference here for the Church is not present on earth and will not be in this tribulation.
- 3 This term, **the elect** is used three times by Jesus Christ in the Olivet discourse: verses 22, 24 and 31 (Mark 13:20, 22, 27) where it seems to refer to the same group of people.
- 4 The term, **the elect** can refer to all believers in The Tribulation, both Jews and Gentiles and there is no harm if it is so understood.

5 However, if we stay with the context:

1. That Jesus is speaking in reference to Israel.
2. Throughout the book of Daniel, this time in history is referred decreed for **your people**, that is the Jews.
3. Matthew 24:31 uses familiar language of God gathering the Jews from all over the earth back to the promised land.

So, concluding from these 3 points lets understand this as referring to the elect among the Jews.

In conclusion we learn so much about our God in Matthew 24:22

“Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”

We learn about His love—**DIVINE LOVE**—sees a need and meets that need as He did at the cross of Jesus.

Then we learn about
God’s Sovereignty
His Omniscience
His Omnipotence
His Faithfulness

His Immutability.

**THIS IS A GOD YOU CAN TRUST
FOR ALL ETERNITY
AND WITH YOUR DAILY LIFE!**