

# Tribulation of Those Days

Having recently spent seven months in Britain and Europe, I returned to Australia to find several unopened Journals. It was for me pleasing to see so many articles and ads which recognise many of the points I have made in adverts in 'The Journal' over the years, and so the 'Journal' is to be thanked along with all those 'free thinkers' who were liberated because of the splintering of the WCG, without which this would not have occurred. There is then a growing recognition within the churches of God for its members to look directly to Jesus Christ and His word which is the message behind this article I had previously written:

One of the greatest dangers for any Christian is to lose sight of our leader. Acts 11:23, *'Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.'* 1 Peter 2:21 *'For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.'* Matthew 4:4, *'But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'*

Of course we all need teachers when we are babes in Christ and there is a common tendency for us to continue looking to that teacher long after the time when we should have grown in grace and knowledge enough to recognise that we must *directly* build our relationship with Jesus Christ through diligent personal study of His word.

We can't afford to presume that any man has been given the authority to speak for God in the manner of that 'vicar of Christ' the Pope, for God's word is complete, giving us all the guidance we need, providing we have spent the time and effort needed to familiarise ourselves with its contents. Needless to say this is not something we can achieve in a year or two, for God's word is rather like an onion, it has so many layers! Study it once and find a deeper layer, and then again the next, once we have absorbed the first, so there is always room for the conclusions of others to be examined in the process, but your *personal* conclusions based upon prayer and study of God's word, guided by God's Holy Spirit, 2 Timothy 2:15 will always remain the most important! *'Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.'*

The trap that many have fallen into is remaining as part of a church which feels *it has the right* to determine doctrine for all its members, based upon the beliefs of one man, or a group of men. Such a leader tends to grow in power in his own sight, deluding himself that no-one else represents God. Anyone else who thinks differently must therefore be wrong, and cannot be allowed to remain. Such a church will have a hierarchy to control its members, and those who bow before it and its leader will have, in effect, replaced Jesus Christ with a man, and the biblical word for this is idolatry. One COG leader condemned such an approach as the 'image of the Beast' and 'Babylon' in his early ministry, only to fall into the trap of later introducing it into his congregations himself, calling it 'the government of God' as his church grew so much that he began to lose control.

Of course, the man may have set out with all good intentions, and achieved a great deal, but just look at your politicians to see that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. *All* men are fallible and those who gain a following gain admiration, probably wealth, and power, so maybe you can understand why a servant of God can prefer to remain anonymous in order to avoid becoming such a stumbling block to those whom he serves.

The main problem is that once doctrine is established in such a church it becomes unthinkable that it may be mistaken. God's 'Prophet', or 'Apostle' can't be wrong, and so error becomes entrenched, so firmly established that whole churches have been blinded to the truth which they could in reality prove for themselves by opening their minds to the whole of God's word.

Today, I want to examine one such error which has led almost all of the Church of God into confusion about the events of the End Time, so much so that in their false belief, they will be totally unprepared for Christ's return for His Bride. Read Matthew 25:1-10. The same idolatrous error will cause them to fail to follow God's explicit instructions, which have passed unnoticed by those so deceived, so that in their unpreparedness, their right to be in the first resurrection is placed under threat.

No one wants to hear that they have been deceived, especially when they have always applied Revelation 12:9 to others, - *'And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him'*, so it is understandable that few will have the courage to examine what follows here, which places greater responsibility upon their shoulders than ever before, but then, logic should tell us that of those 144,000 who do marry Christ after the first resurrection, the proportion who are alive at the End Time, out of the many years since Creation, cannot be large, maybe even less than 1,000.

Many of them will be so elderly that they may not feel physically able to undertake the challenging demands of the scriptural instructions God provides, and rightly so, which places even more responsibility upon the few who are capable. Which category do you fall into?

So, what is this most common error in God's Church? **It is the erroneous belief that the tribulation lasts for just 3 ½ years!** This is made clear in the book of Daniel, who provides much information about the last 7 years of the End Time. Let us notice first of all that Daniel is providing us with End Time information, Daniel 10:14, *"Now I am come to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come."*

We should understand that in prophecy, God's word reveals that 'one day' may often picture one whole year. *'For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.....each day for a year.'* (Heb. *'a day for a year,')* Ezekiel 4:5-6.

Daniel 9:24 introduces the 70 weeks prophecy, each week made up of 7 days, each day signifying one year. *'Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.'*

Then, verse 9:25, *'Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.'* This is 7+62= 69 weeks. Multiply by 7, = 483 years from 20<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes, and this brings us up to the ministry of Christ.

After that mention of Christ's ministry, there is an obvious discontinuity until the End Time 70<sup>th</sup> week, when the beast will appear, who goes on to persecute the Saints, God's Holy people, (Daniel 11:33) and gains control over most of the Saints for the last 3 ½ years, until 9:27, when God's Kingdom is finally established here on earth. *'And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one [last 70<sup>th</sup>] week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.'* By comparing this last verse with Revelation 17:12-14, we see that the beast is here referred to as the desolator.

It is in the last days of those seven years that all of the earth finally comes under the control of the returned Christ, Daniel 2:41-44, *'And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be*

*destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.'*

However, in Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks, the last 'week' of 7 days (a day for a year) is divided in two by the Beast, then causing *'sacrifice and oblation to cease'*, and bringing about the *'abomination of desolation'*, Matthew 24:15. Before His armies surround Jerusalem, God's people are forced to flee, and God's commanded work in Jerusalem is stopped. The commanded work (read Isaiah 40:1-11 in the NIV for clarity) is *'the sacrifice and oblation'* of Daniel 9:27, not the sacrifice of animals in a physical temple, for God's faithful are the spiritual temple, offering spiritual sacrifices today, 1 Peter 2:5, *'you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.'*

It is only to the remnant of God's Church (Revelation 12:17) who fall under the control of the Beast in the last 3 ½ years, that the Beast makes his claim to be God, 2 Thessalonians 2:4, *'He will oppose and exalt himself above every so-called god or object of worship. So he will seat himself in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.'*

Let us note however that the Beast made the covenant with Judah **for one week**, i.e. seven years, and that it is only in the middle of that seven year period that he breaks it. Daniel 9:27, *'And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week : and in **the midst of the week** he shall cause [the] sacrifice and the oblation to cease...'* The word for covenant here is Strong's 1285 meaning 'cutting a compact or league'.

Daniel's chapters 11, from verse 21, and chapter 12 provide us a detailed overview of those last seven years and Daniel 11:23 explains what occurs after he has made that league or covenant, *'And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people.'* The word 'league' in this verse is Strong's number 2266 'chabar' – compact or league.

What follows is a consecutive account of the actions of the Beast in relation to the nation of Israel in the Middle East (Daniel 10:14, as we read) as revealed to Daniel by the archangel Michael.

However, the big mistake is to uncritically swallow the teaching of almost all of the Churches of God that the tribulation only begins at the half way point of those last seven years. The one chapter in the Bible that has been ignored makes this quite clear. It is Revelation 14. There is a detailed study of this chapter in the 'Articles' index on this website, but basically, it should be clear to anyone who reads Revelation 14 that the six angels bring us messages from God, and they are chronological, covering a period of seven years as we will see.

The **last** and *sixth* angel brings a message about the 'Great Tribulation' which is described as the harvest of the grapes, the last harvest that takes place in Israel each year, Revelation 14:18-20, *'And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into **the great winepress of the wrath of God**. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.'* This 3 ½ year period, as we will see from the previous verses, concludes with Jesus Christ's return and victory at Armageddon, Revelation 19:15, *'From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.'*

Now, notice that the *third* angel, back in verses 9-10 of chapter 14, warns God's faithful people to avoid worshipping the Beast, Revelation 14:9-10, *'And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.'* Some of them fail to qualify to take part in the first resurrection at the halfway point, though they keep all of God's commandments, Rev 14:12, *'Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that **keep the commandments***

*of God, and the faith of Jesus.* As a result they must endure the Great Tribulation. **How long will they endure it?** Compare Revelation 12:14 and 17, *But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time,* and verse 17, *And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.* Yes, Study this; it really does mean **3 ½ years**.

Next, notice that it is the *fourth* angel of Revelation 14, in verse 15, which brings the message that Christ should thrust in His sickle, for this time, the (firstfruit) harvest of the earth, the harvest which is pictured by the first and earlier barley harvest in Israel **is to be harvested**, Revelation 14:15, *And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in your sickle and reap : for the time is come for you to reap ; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.* This is the harvest of the **firstfruit** Saints at the first resurrection who are then taken to heaven for their marriage to Christ before God's throne, Revelation 14: 1-4, *Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb.* Notice that they now have His father's name written on their foreheads, having through marriage entered into the Father's family.

**Obviously then, the first resurrection takes place BEFORE the remnant are left behind to be persecuted by Satan**, but let us **prove** that *again* by other verses.

Notice that in Daniel 11:33, *And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.* However, it is only later, in verses 40-42 that the Beast finally invades Israel with his armies to take Jerusalem, before moving on to defeat Islam.' But not before failing to capture the Saints who flee from Jerusalem and losing one of his armies at Revelation 12:16, while verse 17 **begins** the Great tribulation!

In Matthew 24:1-13 we first see listed the events of the first five seals, also listed in Revelation 6:1-11. Only AFTER the sixth seal do we see the Great tribulation occur, verse 21, *For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.*

Then, once more, only after the fifth seal in Revelation 6:9, do we see the Heavenly Signs of the sixth seal, verse 12, *When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood.* This same event is described in Matthew 24:29, *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 heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.* Here, the **preceding five seals are called 'the tribulation of those days'**, and in both Matthew 24 and Revelation 6 the heavenly signs of the sixth seal are immediately **followed by the first resurrection**. Matthew 24:30-31, *Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other,* Revelation 6:15-16, *Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."*

Consequently, it becomes apparent that the first resurrection takes place BEFORE the great Tribulation which lasts for 3 ½ years, starting at the half way point through the final seven years of the End Time, **not at the Feast of Trumpets at the very end** of those seven years when Jesus Christ finally returns FROM

heaven with His Bride, Zechariah 14:4-5, *'On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. **Then the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with him.**'*

Finally, this is also proved by Revelation 11:15 which many have mistakenly believed describes the 'last trump', *'Then the **seventh angel blew his trumpet**, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."* (You need to read our article 'Revelation 14') Notice that on Christ's final return here, it is **the angel** who blows the trumpet which many have mistakenly believed to be the 'last trump', *which is actually blown at the first resurrection*, for in reality **it is God who sounds that trump**, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, *'For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the **trumpet of God**. And the dead in Christ will rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord **in the air**: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.'* And Zechariah 9:14,16, *'And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the **Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet**, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. ....And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.'* Lifted up at the resurrection to the sea of glass.

If you, as one of God's faithful Saints, believe these scriptures, and the words of Christ, rather than the scenarios of a man or men, it should now be clear that there has long been serious confusion between the 'Great Tribulation', and the 'Tribulation of those days', and that the first resurrection takes place between the two at the half way point during the last seven years. Only if you understand that, need you go on to discover God's clear instructions to His faithful people for the *first half* of those last seven years, which have been tragically ignored as a result of following a man or men, for the time is drawing near when we will need to act on them!

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