

Week of Meetings-04 Gpd's Picture of the Great Tribulation

by Dwight Pentecost

The tribulation period is a seven-year period of unprecedented judgment and wrath from God, divided into two equal parts, with the last half being called the Great Tribulation.

Duration: 54:58

Scripture: Revelation 6:15-16, Revelation 9:13-21, Revelation 16:1-16

Topics: "End Times", "Gods Wrath"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the events described in the book of Revelation, specifically focusing on the seals and vials of God's wrath. He explains that the seals represent a three and a half year period of judgment upon the earth, with worldwide warfare, famine, and death. The vials, on the other hand, seem to cover just a few days and represent a special sign of God's wrath poured out at the close of the tribulation period. The preacher also references Matthew 24, where Jesus describes this three and a half year period as a time of tribulation. Throughout the sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding these events as a warning and preparation for the future.

Transcript

They shall also build houses, but not inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof. The great day of the Lord is near. It is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord.

The mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of cloud and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities and against the high tower. But I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord, and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.

Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath, but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy, for he shall make even the seedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land. May God add his blessing to the reading of this portion of his word. We are speaking on the subject of God's picture of the tribulation.

Men everywhere have an instinctive fear and dread of that visitation of God's wrath which is to be poured out upon the earth. Even men who have little or no knowledge of the word of God, and little or no knowledge of the revelation in the prophetic scriptures, seem instinctively and inherently to have the conviction that God must judge this earth because of its wickedness. When one looks back through the pages of secular history, as far back as recorded history goes, we have a continuous and unbroken record of rebellion against God.

Civilization after civilization and nation after nation has walked in the way of godlessness and unrighteousness, and men instinctively and conscientiously expect and anticipate some visitation of God's wrath upon this earth because of their iniquity. And yet, men are not clear in that teaching of the word of God that unfolds God's program and God's plan in the tribulation period. Now, in the time that is allotted to us this evening, I'm going to try to cover in a telescopic way the panorama of that tribulation period to try to give you a bird's-eye picture of how the events in God's program fit together for that time.

In successive messages, we are going to deal with some of the specific things revealed in the tribulation period, such as the federated states of Europe, the rise of communism, the rise of Russian communism, the campaign of Armageddon. These and related subjects that all are a part of the doctrine of the tribulation will be dealt with in successive studies in some detail, but I want to try to relate the tribulation period to the general panorama of the ages as we look this evening in God's picture of the tribulation. Now, because they say that one picture is worth 10,000 words, and I have a good many thousand words I'd like to say tonight on this subject, I'm going to try to resort to a few lines in a draft to try to get the scope of God's prophetic program before your minds as we would start with the talk of Christ.

I realize this is going to be a little difficult for those of you that are in the back to see all this next time, come a little bit earlier, for you don't know when I may do this again. But, after the death of Christ, we find that our Lord continued on earth for a brief period before he himself was taken up into glory, and then on the day of Pentecost, or 50 days after the Passover, the Holy Spirit came to take up his residence in the church which is his body. And this present age of which we are now a part had its beginning on the day of Pentecost.

Too long to write out will abbreviate it. And this age has been going on, and we'll just break it because we do not know its length. It has continued so far, something over 1,900 years.

How much longer this present age will continue, we do not know because Scripture has not revealed to us the time of the next prophesied event. If those of you who were here last week will recall, it is the coming of the Lord into the air to take up all the resurrected and living saints of this age to himself. We call this event the Rapture of the Church, or the Translation of the Church.

From the First Thessalonians 4, we will all be caught up. The dead in Christ shall rise first, the living ones will be lifted up and glorified, and together we shall be taken into his presence ever to be with the Lord. That event of the rapture will remove every single believer from off the face of the earth.

Think of it! Not a single believer left on the earth when this rapture occurs. The only ones left on the earth are the unregenerate, the unsaved, the unredeemed. But there will begin, at the Rapture of the Church, a brief period that will last for seven years, which we call the Tribulation Period.

Now, at some future time, we may be able to study the prophecy of Daniel that tells us the length of this Tribulation Period, but I am not going to go into it this evening and ask that you just accept this fact for the

time being that the Tribulation Period will last for seven years. At the end of the Tribulation Period, the Lord who has been in the air will come back not to the air this time, because it is a rapture, but he will come back to the earth. This we call the second advent, or the second coming of Christ.

And at that time, he will institute a kingdom on earth that will last for a thousand years that we call the Millennial Kingdom. Now, we are not concerned this evening with a period between Sunday 12th and the rapture, this present church age or the age of grace as we sometimes speak of it. We are not concerned with the events of the rapture.

We spent an hour together last Sunday night speaking of that. We are not concerned with the second coming of Christ to the earth, nor the Millennial reign. We will have messages on that later.

But we are concerned with this one period that we call the period of the Tribulation. Now, would you let me take just this section, just this much out of here, the seven-year period, and I want to enlarge on that period. This period, beginning at the rapture and concluding at the second advent of Christ to the earth, is to be divided into two equal parts.

Now, if I remember my arithmetic, half of seven is three and a half, and three and a half, and the Tribulation period is seven-year period, will be divided into these two three-and-a-half-year periods. The period in its totality is called the Tribulation period. In the Old Testament, it is called in Jeremiah 20, verse 7, the time of Jacob's trouble.

It is called the time of indignation in Isaiah 26, verse 20, and we could give many other names applied to it in the word of God. Then we find that this last half is spoken of by our Lord in Matthew 24, verse 15 and following as the Great Tribulation. So, we have the whole period referred to as the Tribulation period, seven-and-a-half years of tribulation subdivided into two parts, and the last half is called the time of Great Tribulation.

Now, I ought to remind you that the word tribulation, as it is used in the word of God, is used in a technical and a non-technical sense. When the word tribulation is used in a non-technical sense, it speaks of any trial or suffering through which an individual may go. When it is used in its technical sense in prophecy, it refers to this seven-year period, the tribulation period of unprecedented judgment and wrath from God.

Now, in the prophet Zephaniah, which we read, we find a number of descriptions given to us of this seven-year period. The prophet in verse 14 is speaking of the Day of the Lord. That is a technical term that you students of prophecy, and now that you're here, you're all students of prophecy, that's a term that you ought to get in your mind, and the Day of the Lord is that extended period of time that begins at the rapture of the church and goes all the way through to the end of the millennial age on earth.

It includes the tribulation period and the time of blessings of the millennial age that follows. Now, when you read Zephaniah 1 verse 15, it is obvious the Day of the Lord there is not a reference to the thousand years of a millennium. That is a period of righteousness, and peace, and justice, and equity, and full provision.

He is speaking of the seven years of the tribulation period, and I want you again to notice the words used concerning that tribulation. It is a day of wrath, a day of trouble, distress, wasteness, desolation, darkness, gloominess, clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against offensive cities. That has to do with warfare, and I will bring distress upon men, their blood shall be poured out.

So, that's not a very inviting picture, is it? It's not one that we would welcome or anticipate, and let me present this fact to you. That you can go through every passage in the word of God dealing with the tribulation period, whether it be in the Old Testament or the New Testament, and you will not find one single word that in any way alleviates the suffering, and the misery, and the wrath of God that will be poured out upon the earth in that period. There is not the slightest ray of hope that this period is going to be changed or altered, for it is the day of the visitation of God's wrath.

Now, I want you to see its description in the New Testament, and several passages that we will look at there. Will you turn first of all into Matthew chapter 25, where the Lord Jesus Christ himself gives us a picture of this period. I'm sorry, Matthew chapter 24.

24 verse 21, For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time no, nor ever shall be, and except those days should be shortened, but I believe that word should be terminated, except those days should be terminated, there should no flesh be saved, but for the elect's sake those days shall be terminated, or brought to an end, by the act of God himself. And there, the Lord Jesus Christ so describes the tribulation period that he says that if God did not bring that period to an end, but were to let it go on, man would absolutely destroy every living thing that walks upon the face of the earth. But because God has a program for kindreds and peoples and tongues and nations in the millennial age, God is going to terminate that period so that man cannot wipe himself off the face of the earth by his own destructive capacity and his capacity for evil.

But the Lord says in verse 21, It shall be a time of tribulation such as the world has never seen before. Now would you go over to the book of the revelations, please, and we will see some of the descriptions given to us by John. We will just use several scattered verses to emphasize the character of this period.

And I want you to look, first of all, in Revelation chapter 6 and verse 16. We'd better read verse 15 to begin with. The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks and in the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that is on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

For the great day of his wrath is come, whom shall be able to stand? And there we find the greatest volume of prayer that has ever gone up from the face of the earth is ascending, but it's not ascending to Almighty God. It's a plea and a prayer to the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and destroy life. Why? Because of the fierceness of the wrath of God that is being poured out upon the world.

Then again, when you look in the Revelation and chapter 15, well, we'll go back into chapter 14, verse 19. The angel comes to the harvest of the earth, and we read in Revelation 14, 19, The angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was soddened about the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horses' bridles.

By the faith of the thousand six hundred furlongs, or roughly 250 miles, it is the time of the wrath of God. 15, chapter 1, I saw another time in heaven great and marvelous seven angels, having the seven last plates, for in them is filled up the wrath of God. Look at the end of verse 4, Thou art holy, all nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest.

In verse 7, one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, to live as forever and ever. And so you can go on. Chapter 16, verse 1, I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your way, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

Now, over and over in the New Testament prophetic book, we find this period, the period of the tribulation, called the period of the wrath of God. That is the scriptural designation of the character of this period. Darkness, judgment, pain, suffering, warfare, bloodshed, and above everything else, the divine visitation of the wrath of God upon men.

Now, when we go back in the book of Revelation, we have some very clear descriptions of events that will take place. Let me just briefly try to point out some of these to you, and will you look first of all in Revelation chapter 6. Revelation chapter 6, and in Revelation 6 you find there an angel has a book, or let me put it this way, that the one who sits on the throne has a scroll in his hand. It has been rolled up and then sealed on the end, and then rolled a few more times, and sealed on the end again, and rolled and sealed seven times it has been sealed.

And they watch as someone opens those seals, and we find that the Lord Jesus Christ himself opens this seven-sealed book. Now, in these seals, we have the first unfolding of the judgment of God poured out upon the earth, and in Revelation 6 verse 1 and 2, you see a rider on a white horse. There is a great four-piece movement that brings the world under the authority of a king.

We'll have more to say about him when we study the revised Roman Empire or the beast. Then in verse 3 and 4, he opens the second seal, and he sees the rider on the red horse, and it is explained he takes peace from the earth, they should heal one another. Worldwide warfare.

In verse 5 and 6, the third seal, and there you have worldwide famine, poverty, and physical war. And in verse 7 and 8, you have the fourth seal, which is the visitation of death that sweeps across the face of the earth because of the warfare, the famine, and the pestilence that follow the famine and the warfare. Now then, our Lord is describing the events of the first three and a half years in this chapter in Revelation, and is describing there the great movement in that three and a half year period which God will use to bring judgment upon the earth.

Will you, for just a moment please, turn from the book of Revelation back into Matthew 24, and we'll have the Lord's word in Matthew 24, beginning at verse 4. The Lord himself describes this three and a half year period, or the first half of this time of Jacob's troubles of tribulation. And we read in Matthew 24, Jesus answered and said unto them, Take ye that no man deceive you, for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ. That's the rider on the white horse of Revelation 6. And ye shall hear wars and rumors of wars.

That's the rider on the red horse of Revelation 6. Nations shall rise against nations, kingdoms against kingdoms. There shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places. That's the third rider, the rider on the black horse of Revelation 6. And all these, the Lord says in verse 8, are the beginning of sorrows, or literally, the beginning of labor pains, or birth pains.

That the events of these three and a half years are the false labor pains that are the forerunners of the birth of the new age that's going to be instituted on the earth when the Lord Jesus Christ comes. The beginning of travail, the beginning of sorrow. And so, under those figures are a four-foot movement that

brings the world under a one-world government, the one-world religion, and then this world-wide war and pestilence and famine and death is a description given to us of the first visitation of God's wrath during the tribulation period.

And now will you turn with me, please, to a second passage in the book of the Revelation, and this time in Revelation chapter 8 to 10. For in those chapters, we have John's description of the events of the last three and a half years of the tribulation period, and there in that symbolical language, John speaks of the visitation of God's wrath poured out upon the earth during that second half of the tribulation. In verse, this time, instead of portraying it to us under the figure of a seal scroll, it's under the figure of trumpets that blow to sound an alarm.

In the first trumpet, we find that there is hail and fire mingled with blood. They were cast upon the earth, the third part of the trees and all the grasses burned up. There seems to be a visitation of judgment upon nature that is a sign of God's wrath upon the earth.

In verse 8 and 9, the second trumpet, a great mountain like a volcano erupts into the sea, and the third part of the sea becomes blood. That it upsets the whole course of precipitation in nature so that there is famine and want and death as a result. In verse 10 and 11, the third trumpet sounds, and it sees as it were a great star falling from heaven, and it falls upon the rivers and the fountains of waters, and the source of refreshment and life is turned to poison, and many men die because of the waters that were made bitter or poisonous.

Verse 12 and 13, the fourth trumpet sounds, and there there are signs in heaven so that the third part of the sun, moon, and stars are darkened. There is a supernatural darkness over the face of the earth, divine visitation of wrath. You go into chapter 9, you have the fifth trumpet in the first 12 verses, and there you find the locusts that come to disseminate death over the face of the earth.

And then in chapter 9, verse 13 to 21, you have the sixth trumpet where a marching army of, verse 16, 200,000 or 200 million men marches across the face of the earth to destroy one-third of the world's population is before that marching army. Now, I confess to you that these chapters describe events so gigantic and so suspenseful that we can hardly conceive of them, and yet that is God's picture of his visitation of wrath as it will be poured out upon the earth during the last half of this tribulation period. And as bad as that is, it isn't all, for you have to turn over to chapter 16, and here, under the figure of emptying out vials or bowls, once again the wrath of God is poured out upon the earth.

Now, as I understand it, in Revelation chapter 16, we have a series of events that take place within just a very short time, perhaps within just a few days, at the very end of the tribulation period. While the seals covered three and a half years, and the trumpets covered three and a half years, these vials seem to cover just a few days as a central sign of God's wrath and God's judgment poured out upon the earth at the close of the tribulation period. You will notice that chapter 16 is very much like chapter 8, in that you have the pouring out of a vial upon the earth.

Verse 2, it became a sore upon men which had the mark of the beast, like a great running, festering sore upon the body of every man who gave allegiance to the beast and the false prophet. In verse 3, the sea again is turned to blood and brings death worldwide. In verse 4, the rivers and waters are turned to blood.

In verse 8, the sun becomes so hot that it scorches men with fire. Evidently, the relationship between the sun and this earth is so altered that the sun consumes all that lives upon the face of the earth. In verse 10,

we have the judgment upon all those who were in the kingdom of the beast under the headship of the federated states of Europe, and they gnawed their tongues in pain and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pain and their sore.

Then, in the sixth vial, we find again a great marching army that comes from the east to march across toward Palestine, and then finally, with the sounding of the seventh vial, is the close of the wrath of God. We have gone very briefly through these, and frankly, I don't expect you to remember it all. I am trying to create an impression.

I'm trying to make your spine crawl. Why? Because we have no concept of the holiness of God, the unholiness of man, and God's attitude toward rebellion and rebellious ones. And these prophecies were given to us that we might come to understand something of God's hatred for sin, God's judgment upon sinners and upon the sin of man's sin when men reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

And, once again, may I remind you that no matter where you go in the world, where these events are portrayed to us, there is not given the slightest word of comfort or of hope that this period will be alleviated. It is not a mixture of good and evil, of wrath and of blessing, but it is the time of God's curse upon the earth. Taking something of the character, something of the description of the tribulation period, we briefly want to touch on another vital subject, because I know that this thought is in your minds as you're asking, why would God do such a thing as that? You are sitting there thinking, if he is that God who has poured out wrath upon the earth, he must not be as God of love.

Why is God going to judge the world? I want to deal with that under several headings. If God is going to judge the world, first of all, or pour out this visitation of wrath, first of all in reference to Israel, second in reference to Gentile nations, third in reference to God's program for evil, and fourth in respect to sinners themselves. We don't have much time left to cover those four points, do we? But here goes.

Let's see what we can do. When the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world, his first spoken word was, a repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The Lord Jesus Christ came unto his own that he might call his own nation, his own people, the nation Israel, to repentance.

Call them from their idolatry and their godlessness back to God himself. The nation Israel watched with interest as the Lord Jesus Christ lived his life. They followed him avidly as he worked miracle after miracle and sign after sign.

They listened as words flowed from his lips that revealed to them that he had come to reveal God to them, that he was not of human origin but was of divine origin. And when the Lord Jesus Christ began to express his message home, and to remind these people that they will have no fellowship with him and no part with him unless they turn from their sins, they said, we love our sin, we love our position, we love our prominence, we love our outward ritual and form and our observance of the laws that pleases us. We don't want this man to reign over us.

And they accused him of being a traitor before Pilate, and Pilate condemned him to death because he had presented himself as Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews. Because God had sent his son, the son of David, and the son of God to reign, and the nation Israel had sinned that willful sin, rejecting Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus himself has to announce judgment upon the nation Israel, and I am reading in Matthew 23 verse 37, as our Lord for the last time stands and looks over that city of Jerusalem before he is led into it to be crucified.

He says, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that showest the prophets and stone of them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. Will you underline that phrase, please? For it gives to us the key to Israel's present day suffering, and the key to the purpose of God for Israel in the tribulation period.

Your house is left unto you desolate, for I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Look again, if you will, into the book of Luke, in Luke chapter 21 and verse 24. The second time the Lord announces judgment upon Israel, as he says that they shall fall by the edge of the sword and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

So from the year 70, when Titus, with his Roman legions, marched into Palestine, until Jerusalem shall be delivered at the end of the tribulation period, God is going to bring judgment upon the nation Israel because they rejected the Messiah which God sent unto them. The sin of Israel was not a sin of ignorance. They did not reject Christ because they didn't know who he was.

They didn't reject Christ because they were deceived and blinded into thinking that he was not the Son of God. They did not reject him because there was reasonable doubt. They rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah after they had had the full evidence, after they knew the evidence, and they willfully rejected that evidence.

And God holds them guilty nationally of that sin of rejecting Christ, and God says that he is going to purge out a people for himself. Now, we have to get one more passage as we go back into the prophecy of Ezekiel. The prophecy of Ezekiel, where Ezekiel tells what God is going to do for the nation Israel.

Ezekiel chapter 20, and I want to begin reading in verse 33. "Thy lives, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you. I will bring you out from the people,' that is, out from the Gentiles, "and will gather you out of the countries wherein you are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out,' there's that word fury again, "and I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face, like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God,' now notice these words, "and I will cause you to pass under the rod,' the rod always speaks of judgment in the Old Testament here, "and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant, and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me, and they shall not enter the land of Israel, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.' So what we find is, in the first place, God has a program for Israel, that during this period of the tribulation, he's going to bring this judgment upon the nation Israel, and many in that nation will turn to God, will confess their sins, will accept Jesus Christ as Savior, and when Jesus Christ impacts the earth to institute his Millennial reign, they will go into that earthly Millennial kingdom, they will have been brought to God because God has poured out his judgment upon the nation.

Then there is a second reason, and that is in reference to the Gentile nations. Back at the time of Nebuchadnezzar, the Gentile nations captured the land of Palestine. The land of Palestine has been under a succession of Gentile rulers from the time of Nebuchadnezzar more than 500 years before Christ until the present day.

Palestine was ruled over by the Babylonians, and then by the Medo-Persians, and then by the Grecians, and then under many different forms of the Roman Empire. During the tribulation period, once again the nation Israel will be ruled over by the head of the Roman Empire. We're going to study this in a future evening in great detail.

But God is going to judge those Gentile nations because they have been the oppressors of the nation Israel. I would direct your attention to one of the parables which our Lord gave in Matthew chapter 25, and we find there in Matthew 25 verse 31 to 46, the Lord gives off the instruction concerning the judgment of the sheep and the goats. This is a judgment on living Gentile nations, and the Lord Jesus is going to separate all Gentiles at the time of his second coming to the earth into two classes, the saved and the unsaved.

And the Lord is going to say to the saved, as much as you did it to the least of these my brethren, the nation Israel, you did it to me. Enter into the kingdom. He's going to say to the goat on his left hand, you didn't do it to these my brethren, the nation Israel, the believers in Israel.

Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire. There is to be a judgment to remove every unsaved Gentile, and God is going to pour out fury upon Gentile people because they have sought to thwart God's purpose by exterminating the nation Israel. One passage more in this line in the book of the Revelation, in Revelation chapter 3 and verse 10, where the Lord addresses the church of Philadelphia and says, Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, or the hour of tribulation, the hour of trial.

Now, notice these words, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Now, this is a very interesting word that John writes here. It's coming upon all the world to try them that literally are earth dwellers.

Now, the word earth dwellers does not speak of geographical locations, people who live on the earth, as opposed to the little green men from Mars. This is an ethical word, and it speaks of men who are joined to the earth. We would call them worldly, or worldly-minded ones.

And here John teaches us that the Lord Jesus Christ is going to pour out his fury to prove what men are earth dwellers, or worldlings, and which ones are truly united to the Lord Jesus Christ by grace. There is a third purpose of God in the tribulation theory, and that is to reveal the program of Satan, to let the program of evil come to its confirmation. I'll have to touch on this just very briefly, but what we find is this fact that from the time of Satan's first rebellion against God in heaven, before the time of the creation of this earth, Satan desired to be head of a kingdom.

He wanted to rule over every created intelligence and take the place of God. For his system was a lawless system, and God put the control upon the lawless system of Satan, and said to Satan, you can go so far but no further. In spite of all the wickedness and godlessness that we see in the world today, we still haven't seen one fraction of what the lawlessness of Satan actually is.

In spite of all that we saw during World War II, of the bestiality of the human nature as a thought to exterminate races and peoples, we have seen nothing of what the human part is like. Because God is restraining Satan, and Satan's kingdom cannot come to its fulfillment. But God is going to say to Satan, Satan, you've wanted to have urinating for a long time.

You wanted to have a chance, without any restraint and without any hindrance, to demonstrate what your kingdom is like, to prove what you can do. But I've always kept a restraint on you. Now, I'm going to take every restraint off, and I'm going to turn you free to do exactly what you want.

And so, during the tribulation period, we are going to... I shouldn't say we, should I? Well, praise the Lord we won't be there. But I'm going to say that this earth is going to see a reign of lawlessness such as has not even been dreamed of, let alone experienced in the annals of history. In Revelation chapter 13 and verse 2, Satan is going to bring a world ruler on this world scene.

And we read the last part of Revelation 13 through Satan, or the dragon, gave this one his power, and his seat, and his great authority. And we find from that passage that Satan is going to manipulate in world affairs so as to bring the man of sin, or the beast, or some calling the antichrist, on this world scene. This one is described for us in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul writes about the man of sin, or the lawless one, verse 4, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped so that he is God, sitting in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

This is the one who will cause his mark to be put upon the palm of the hand or the forehead of everyone on the earth, and no man can buy or sell unless he has the identifying mark of the beast. We'll be studying that in a future study, until we pass it on. But here we are going to find a system operating in the earth under full Satanic control, in which the iniquity and the lawlessness of Satan is openly and fully demonstrated, and God is going to be able to point to that demonstration of lawlessness and say, that's what sin is, that's what evil is, and that is the end of everyone who rejects my son and rejects my word.

God has a purpose for Israel to purify out from among them a saved remnant. He has a purpose for the Gentiles to punish the Gentiles for their despicable treatment of the Jews. He has a purpose in relation to Satan to let Satan demonstrate to all the earth the sinfulness of sin, but there is one final purpose, and we anticipated that in some of the passages which we read.

But God is going to pour out judgment upon sinful men themselves, and as we saw it in the sixth chapter of the book of the revelations, sinners are going to feel the outpouring of the wrath of God, and in verse 16 they are going to beg for physical death, but will not be able to find that physical death by a landslide. And we see something of the hardness and the deceitfulness of sin when we turn to Revelation 16 verse 10, when the angel pours out his vial from the seat of the beast and his kingdom was full of darkness, they gnawed their tongues for pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and they repented not, or as the original says, they would not repent of their sin. And you go through here passage after passage.

God is pouring out judgment upon wicked men who have vowed before this satanically controlled individual to call him God. God says, I'm going to judge you for your sin of rejecting my son, and they say, we refuse to repent, we refuse to turn to God. So God is going to bring physical judgment upon the world of men who have gone off in this spiritual parlor trade, worshiping Satan as God.

Now, what is the hope? During the tribulation period, according to Revelation 7, God will raise up a host of witnesses. They will be sovereignly born again as the apostle Paul was sovereignly brought to God out of darkness into light on the Damascus road. And as Paul was breathing out threatenings and cursings against God and God's people, God in his grace reached down and took hold of Paul of Tarsus and brought him to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and sent him out as the angel who brought the message of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire.

God is going to sovereignly lay hold of 144,000 Jews. He's going to bring them out of darkness to light and send them over the face of the earth. And Revelation 7 says there will be multitudes from every indigenous tongue and tribe and nation that will meet the Lord Jesus Christ and come back to earth to reign, because they have lost their native place in the blood of the Lamb.

For almost all those who accept Jesus Christ as Savior during the tribulation period will pay with their lives for their faith in Christ. Satan will keep to terminate every believer on the face of the earth through the instrumentality of the man of faith and the system of the false prophet. But praise God, we're not looking forward to the tribulation.

We're not wondering when this world war is going to start, when this false peace movement will burst upon the earth to plunge the earth into war. For the Lord Jesus Christ himself has given us this blessed hope that before God lets these events begin to unfold on the earth, he's going to appear in the clouds. He's going to summon every believer in Jesus Christ to his house.

And when God's wrath is poured out upon the earth, we're going to be in his presence. We're going to be like him. We're going to see him as he is.

Every person should the last church take place tonight, every person within the sound of my voice who has not personally accepted Jesus Christ is going to experience the very events that we have been describing. The time of awful desolation and destruction and wrath, and following that the eternal separation from God for us. I present you a living, victorious, triumphant savior who will receive you and bring you deliverance from the hour of testing that's coming upon the earth.

If you will put your faith and trust in him. We're going to be dealing, Lord willing, next Sunday night on the question, will the church go through the simulation series? You may be familiar with the fact that there are different interpretations. Some folks think we're going through the first half of it.

Some folks think we're going through all of it. What is our mission? Are we looking for the man of truth, or are we looking for the son of man? For the difference it makes as we live day by day, the child of God, we can lift up our eyes for our redemption is drawing nigh. But if you are here without trust, there is only the awful expectation of judgment, and I invite you to receive Christ.

For there is therefore now no judgment to those that are in sin. Our Fathers, we do thank thee for the privilege of studying the portions of the word of God that have been before us this evening. We pray that thou will give us a heart to know thee, to be brought into fellowship with thyself as we understand thy purpose and program.

We ask, O God, that if there is one to you who has not accepted Christ as Savior, in view of the visitation of God's wrath that will come, that one might accept Christ, to be delivered from every form of sin. Give us, we know thee, the confidence of believing in a delivering Savior, to live in the light of his coming. For it is in his flesh that may we trust.

Amen.

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