**BIBLE STUDY II**

**THE GREAT TRIBULATION – EVENTS AFTER THE RAPTURE**

Joel 2:1-13; Zephaniah 1:7-9, 14-18; Matthew 24: 21-29; II Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 13:1-18; 17:8-13

The clause ‘catching up of the saints’ is compressed in one word ‘rapture’ – i.e the withdrawing of God’s people from the earth. It is an event whereby all true believers that keep God’s commandments will be supernaturally caught up to meet Jesus in the sky (II Thessalonians 4:15-18). It will precede, but usher in the great tribulation (Matthew 24:21) and the marriage supper of the lamb simultaneously (Revelation 19:7, 9). Then the second coming of Christ (Revelation 1:7); the millennial reign of Christ (Revelation 20:6); God’s final judgement (Revelation 20: 10-15); and God’s everlasting kingdom known as the new heaven and the new earth (Revelation 21:1-5; 3:12).

**THE MEANING OF GREAT TRIBULATION**

The word ‘tribulation’ literally means great trouble or sufferings. *Trouble* means worry, pain, difficulty, danger, pang, sorrow, torture or disturbance. The whole world as well as individuals will be worried and confused. *Sufferings* mean the feelings of pain, discomfort or sorrow as a result of torture in the body and mind.

The English word *tribulation* originated from an old French word ‘trībulātiō’ and a Latin word ‘trībulāre*’* which means to afflict or to oppress. Tribulation is synonymous to [trouble](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/trouble), [suffering](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/suffering), [worry](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/worry), [trial](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/trial), [blow](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/blow), [pain](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/pain), [burden](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/burden), [distress](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/distress), [grief](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/grief), [misery](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/misery), [curse](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/curse), [ordeal](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/ordeal), [hardship](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/hardship), [sorrow](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/sorrow), [woe](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/woe), [hassle](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/hassle), [misfortune](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/misfortune), [unhappiness](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/unhappiness), [heartache](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/heartache), [adversity](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/adversity), [affliction](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/affliction), [wretchedness](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/wretchedness), [vexation](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/vexation), or misfortune. Tribulation isa cause of distress, a state of suffering, great affliction, distress, or a severe trial.

It is very difficult to describe ‘great tribulation’ with human words, except with the few descriptions we have in the Bible (Matthew 24:21; Daniel 12:1; Jeremiah 30:7). The period will begin with the signing of a peace agreement between the 'man of sin', the Anti-Christ, with the nation of Israel and the world governments (Daniel 9:26-27; Revelation 13:1-10). If tribulation is the worst thing that can happen to anybody, then the pains of great tribulation are indescribable.

There is no human word to describe how terrible the ‘great tribulation’ will be. It means people will groan in anguish, great pain, sorrow, sufferings, confusion or perplexity. It is also the state of being in danger or difficulty and needing help. It means people will be in danger, needing help but they will not find; they will cry unto God, but he will not answer them (Proverbs 1:24-31; Zephaniah 1:15, 17).

**SCRIPTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION:** The length of the tribulation is seven years. The great tribulation will be in sequence as the Bible gives us the following understanding:

1. The seventy weeks Daniel prophesied (Daniel 9:24-27; Mathew 24:15).
2. The rise and fall of the anti-Christ with one global government (Revelation 13:1-9).
3. The period of divine punishment on the atheists, backsliders and all sorts of sinners who have failed to live according to God’s standard (Revelation 14:10-11).
4. The period of God’s punishment on the nation Israel for rejecting and crucifying Jesus Christ, the Messiah (Matthew 27:24-25; Luke 19:42-44; 21:24).

**TERRIBLE FEATURES OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION:** Daniel 12:1; Joel 2:1-2; Zephaniah 1:14-8

The Bible gives vivid description of the great tribulation: the day of the Lord; the great day of the Lord; the time of Jacob’s trouble; a time of trouble; strange tribulation; a day of wastefulness; a day of desolation; a day of gloominess; prayers unto God will be unanswered (Proverbs 1:28-31; Jeremiah 30:7; Micah 3:4; Isaiah 55:6,7; Matthew 24:21).

In addition, there will be physical manifestation of demonic personalities; nightmares and demonic oppressions; frequent occurrences of earthquakes; water and air pollution; incurable epidemic and endemic; strange hotness of the sun; destruction of the sun, moon and stars; tick darkness; unbearable torture; physical molestation; physical, mental, and emotional weaknesses; famine of spiritual stamina; famine of foodstuffs, famine of medical attention, famine of emotional support, famine of compassion; a period of bloody wars and deadly explosions (Joel 3:15; Matthew 24:1-51; Revelation 12:12). Besides, people’s hearts will be hardened (Revelation 9:20-21).

**SALIENT REASONS FOR THE GREAT TRIBULATIONS:** (Zechariah 12:10-11)

The great tribulation is significant for certain reason: It will be a period of: **1.** The fulfilment of scriptural prophesies; 2. Punishments of all backsliders, hypocrites and un-repented sinners since Adam; **3.** Fulfilment of God’s word; **4.** The period of Jacob’s trouble; **5.** God’s revenge; **6.** Proving God’s supremacy over Satan and human disobedience; **7.** To force Israel to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the prophesied long expected Messiah; **8.** To prevent saints from partaking in the torture of the great tribulation; **9.** To pave way for the second-coming of Christ and the establishment of Christ’s millennial reign on earth.

**THE PERIOD OF GREAT TRIBULATION**

Great tribulation will last for a period of seven years and mark a period of terrible and untold hardship on earth which the world has never witnessed since the creation. The great tribulation will be in two phases and each will last for 42 months or 3 years.

**FIRST PHASE OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION**

The phase I of the great tribulation will last for 42 months or 3 years (Revelation 13:5). The great tribulation will begin to manifest immediately after the rapture of the saints (II Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 4:1). There will be occurrences of many terrible events during the first phase of the great tribulation. For example, there will be:

1. Confusion all over the world: Jeremiah 7:19-20. Rapture which is the withdrawal of the saints from the earth will usher in global confusion. The rapture will be sudden, unannounced and a surprise to those who will be left behind. Un-raptured parents will be searching for their children who would have been withdrawn from the earth; children will be crying for their missing parents; creditors for their missing debtors; employers for their missing staff; guidance for the missing children that are put in their custodies; many Pastors and church members will be confused for the raptured of their members and leaders. Drivers will be confused for sudden disappearances of their passengers. Kidnappers will also increase because they will capitalize on the occasion to kidnap people for ritual and ransom purposes. In addition, there will be plane crash, accidents, shipwreck and explosions in many places because several drivers, pilots and operators would have been raptured. There will be arrest and prosecution here and there globally. There will be violence, unrest and demonstration in differ places. The conscience of the un-raptured believers will torture them because they are the only people who would have understood what has happened. The United Nations will be helpless to help the terrible situation and be confused of where to start and what to do.
2. The rise of the anti-Christ, the beast, who will claim to be GOD or the Messiah: The anti-Christ will subtly emerge to calm the global confusion the rapture has caused. He will begin to preach the possibility of global peace and one government. He will oppressively and successfully operate for a period of three-and-half years (II Thessalonians 2:8-12).
3. The anti-Christ will sign a peace agreement with Israel and the rest of the world governments (Daniel 11:21, 27-28; II Thessalonians 2:3-4).
4. The introduction of a powerful one-world government by the anti-Christ: He will introduce one global currency and total control of global economy; a strict means of transaction, production, banking, commerce, among others. He will obviously use complex technology and demonic manipulations to achieve most of his devilish activities (Revelation 13:16-17).
5. Compulsory introduction of the mark 666 of the beast: (Revelation 13: 16-18). The anti-Christ will mark his subjects to spare them from the persecution his forces will inflict on Christ’s followers. Those who accept the mark show their allegiance to Satan, their willingness to operate within the economic system he promotes, and their rebellion against God. There is no remedy of God’s forgiveness for such people again (Revelation 13:5; 14:9-10).
6. The worship of the beast: The beast that will be a self-acclaimed-GOD will be worshipped throughout the world by those who would have received his mark (II Thessalonians 2:3-4; Revelation 13:12; 14:9-11).
7. The tyranny of the anti-Christ: The emergence of the anti-Christ will be sudden with a subtle reign of dictatorship and oppression across the globe. It will be the reign of terror, persecution, torture, molestation, imprisonment and destruction of lives and properties of those who will resist or refuse to receive the mark 666 (Revelation 13:7).
8. Breaking of the peace agreement and the betrayer of the nation Israel. The anti-Christ will induce the nation Israel to destroy her weaponries (arms and ammunitions) by signing the so-called ‘Peace Agreement.’ However, the anti-Christ who would have claimed to be the Messiah will suddenly turn to be a terrorist by ruthlessly killing, maiming, imprisoning and destroying the nation of Israel. He will eventually conquer Israel! The destruction of Israel will force them to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the long expected Messiah. They will be sorrowful and mourn for rejecting Jesus; and then cry unto God to send the Messiah, Jesus Christ, for their rescue (Daniel 8:25; Zechariah 12:10, 1-14). This will happen at the tail-end of the 42 months of the anti-Christ’s reign.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ANTI-CHRIST**

Daniel 8:23-25; II Thessalonians 2:8-12; Revelation 13:1-18

The Anti-Christ will be notorious and possess many terrible traits: **1.** He will be a dictator, self-willed and a terrorist (Revelation 13:16, 17); **2.** He will be an atheist. He will have no regard for God or gods, Presidents or kings, women or children (II Thessalonians 2:3-4; Revelation 13:4-8, 12); **3.** He will despise women (Daniel 11:37; Zechariah 14:2); **4.** He will be a self-acclaimed GOD and blaspheme the God of heaven (Daniel 11:36-39; Revelation 13:4-8); **5.** He will understand dark sentences (mysteries) (Daniel 8:23); **6.** His countenance will be terrifying (Daniel 8:23; Revelation 13:1); **7.** He will change the world values and systems (Daniel 7:25); **8.** He will be cruel and merciless (Daniel 8:24); **9.** He will be crafty and a destroyer (Daniel 8:25; 13:7); **10.** He will be a deceiver (Daniel 11:21-22); **11.** He will be a performer of false and demonic wonders (II Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:13, 15); **12.** He will be a conqueror of nations through bloody wars. He will be a war criminal who has ever lived; the greatest mass murderer in history. (Daniel 8:25; 11:38, 42-42).

**SECOND PHASE OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION:**

II Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 1:7

The second phase of the great tribulation will also last for 42 months or 3 years. The tribulation will be in sequence: **1.** There will be backsliding, denying of Jesus and apostasy as a result of the unprecedented sufferings (II Thessalonians 2:3-12; Revelation 12:10-12; 13:12, 12-18); **2.** The opening of the 7 seals of a scroll by Christ (Revelation 5, 6 and 7); **3.** The swearing of a giant Angel to facilitate God’s judgement (Revelation 10:5-11); **4.** There will be global untold hardship (Revelation 11:1-19; Daniel 12:1, 5-7; Jeremiah 30:6, 7); **5.** The Anti-Christ will betray and defeat Israel through craftiness and flatteries (Luke 21:20-22, 24, 25; Daniel 11:40-45); **6.** The ill-treatment of Israel by the anti-Christ will force them to go on exile (Luke 21:24; Revelation 12:13-17; Isaiah 16:1-5); **7.** The pouring of the seven vials on earth will bring woes (curses) on the earth (Revelation 15:1-6; 16:21; 18:1-24). Woe refers to great sorrow, distress, curses or troubles. The angelic woes will cause great sorrow or distress to un-raptured people (Revelation 9: 12-21; 10:1-11; 11:1-19; 13:1-14; 14:14-19); **8.** The killing and resurrection of the two personalities who will witness for God (Revelation 11:7-12); **9.** The great tribulation saints will be martyred (Revelation 6:9-11; 14:13; 20:4-6); **10.** The second coming of Christ that will end the great tribulation and usher in the millennial reign of Christ with the 144,000 Jews or the great tribulation martyrs and all the resurrected saints (Revelation 14:1-4, 13; 20:4-6).

**COINCIDENTAL EVENTS WITH THE GREAT TRIBULATION**

While the great tribulation goes on here on earth, the raptured saints will be in paradise with the Lord Jesus for certain purposes: **1.** The tears and sorrows of the saints will be wiped away (Revelation 21:4); **2.** The saints will be making merry at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:6-9); **3.** The saints will join the holy Angels to be worshiping God with new and heavenly songs (Revelation 7:9-17; 14:1-5; 4:5, 7); **4.** The saints will receive rewards for the labour of their righteousness (I Corinthians 3:11-15; 9:24-27; Revelation 2:17, 25-28; 21:4); **5.** Preparation for the second advent of Jesus Christ (Jude 14, 15).

During the great tribulation, the entire world will be ruled by Satan (Revelation 12:7-17; 20: 1-2; II Thessalonians 2:9) through the Anti-Christ (II Thessalonians 2:1-10; Daniel 7:8,24; Revelation 13) and the false prophet (Matthew 24:15; Revelation 13:1-19, 14:9-11; 16:2-12). However, through the omnipotent power of God they will be ruthlessly and completely defeated (Daniel 8:25).

**THE SEVEN SEALS**: Revelation 5:1, 6; 6:1-17; 7: 1-17

Seal refers to anything fixed on an object that prevents it from being used or opened except by the authorized person. These seven seals cannot just be un-wrapped by anybody except Jesus, the slain Lamb of the Lord (Revelation 6:1; 5:12). The four horses are part of the unfolding judgement of God, representing different kinds of God’s judgement of people’s sins and rebellion.

1. The first seal: A white horse with a personality holding a bow to conquer people (Revelation 6:1-2).
2. The second seal: A red horse, symbolizing warfare and bloodshed to take peace from the earth (Revelation 6:3-4).
3. The third seal: A black horse, ushering famine into the world (Revelation 6:5-6).
4. The fourth seal: A pale horse, symbolizing death (Revelation 6: 7-8).
5. The fifth seal: It represents the martyrs (Revelation 6:9-11).
6. The sixth seal: The great day of God’s untamed wrath (Revelation 6: 12-17; 7:7:1-17).
7. The seventh seal: The sounds of seven Angels (Revelation 8:1-13; 9:1-17; 10:1-11; 11:1-14).

**THE SOUNDS OF SEVEN ANGELS**: Revelation 8:1-13; 9:1-17; 10:1-11; 11:1-14

T**he first Angel** will sound his trumpet to release hail and fire mingled with blood upon the earth (Revelation 8:7). **The second Angel** will sound his trumpet to throw a mountainous fire into the sea to cause water pollution, prevent sea transportation and destroy sea creatures (Revelation 8:8-9). **The third Angel** will sound his trumpet to make a poisonous and burning star fall to permanently pollute the sources of all global waters (Revelation 8:10-11). **The fourth Angel** will sound his trumpet to permanently destroy the third part of the sun, the moon and the stars so as to cause darkness on earth (Revelation 8:12). The consequences of the sounds of the remaining three Angels will be so terrible that an Angel will have to be crying woes upon the inhabitants of the earth (Revelation 8:13). **The fifth Angel** will sound his trumpet to open a bottomless pit that emits poisonous locusts to torment the people who live upon the earth (Revelation 9:1-12). **The sixth Angel** will sound his trumpet to release another four (demonic) angels to torment people to death (Revelation 9:13-17; 10:1-11; 11:1-14). **The seventh Angel** will sound his trumpet to usher in Christ’s millennial reign with the saints (Revelation 11:15-19).

All these pains and sufferings during the treat tribulation are only partial judgement. They are like a drop of water of a tip of finger from an ocean, when compared with God’s final judgement and the pains in the bottomless pit in the lake of fire (Revelation 9:6; Mark 9:43-48). The earlier sinners and backsliders repent, the better (Isaiah 55:6-7).

**THE MINISTRIES OF SEVEN ANGELS WITH VIALS**: Revelation 16:1-21

Vial refers to a small glass container like cup or bowl. These bowls or cups in the hands of the seven angels are full of God’s wrath and the contents will be sequentially poured on all the un-raptured people.

1. The ministry of the first Angel: The first Angel will pour the contents of his bowl on men to cause them to develop noisome and grievous sores all over their bodies (Revelation 16: 2).
2. The ministry of the second Angel: The second Angel will pour the contents of his vial on the seas, poisoning the seas to smell and all sea creatures to die (Revelation 16: 3).
3. The ministry of the third Angel: The third Angel will pour the contents of his vial on rivers and fountains of waters to turn blood (Revelation 16: 4).
4. The ministry of the fourth Angel: The forth Angel will empty his vial on the Sun to increase its heat to scourge men (Revelation 16: 8-9).
5. The ministry of the fifth Angel: The fifth Angel will empty his vial on the seat of the anti-Christ to turn his kingdom (that is the whole world) to complete darkness (Revelation 16: 10-11).
6. The ministry of the sixth Angel: The sixth Angel will empty his vial on River Euphrates to dry it in order to prevent sea transport (Revelation 16: 12).
7. The ministry of the seventh Angel: The seventh Angel will pour the contents of his vial on the air to cause thunder and release a great hail from heaven as well as to cause strange earthquakes (Revelation 16: 17-18, 20-21).

In those days, many will want to die, but they will not be able (Revelation 9:6; 6:14-17).

**THE END OF GREAT TRIBULATION**

The great tribulation will end with sequence of events: Joel 3:13-14; Micah 1:3-4

1. The Anti-Christ will deceive, betray and defeat Israel as a nation as the penalty for rejecting and crucifying Jesus Christ, the Messiah (Zephaniah 3:8; Zechariah 14:2; Luke 19:42-44; 21:20, 22, 24,). The oppression will be too much for Israel that they will acknowledge and accept Jesus as the Messiah. They will cry unto Him to come and deliver them, but only 144,000 of them who have not received mark 666 of the beast will obtain mercy (Zechariah 12:10-11; Revelation 14:1,3). This will necessitate the second advent of Christ (Luke 21:20, 22, 24, 26-27).
2. The battle of Armageddon: The Anti-Christ will mobilize all evil and military forces with modern military artilleries to fight against Jesus; but he will be suddenly destroyed (Ezekiel 38:3; Daniel 11:45; Zechariah 14:2-4; II Thessalonians 1:8-9; 2:8; Revelation 16:16; 20:1-3).

The second coming of Jesus will end the great tribulation with the following implications: Jesus will ruthlessly defeat the Anti-Christ, the false prophet, and the devil who will simultaneously be chained for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-3). Then, Christ will establish his Millennial reign on earth with the saints before God’s final judgement (Revelation 20:11-15; 21:1-7).