THE FUTURE FORETOLD

Biblical Prophecy Without the Panic

WHAT IS THE TRIBULATION?

Study Companion

READ • REFLECT • STUDY • APPLY

TEXT FIRST. THEORY SECOND.

KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE. KNOW WHY YOU BELIEVE IT.

PART ONE

FOLLOW THE MESSAGE

Start Here

Seven years.

The Antichrist.

Terrible judgments.

A world in chaos.

Those are some of the things people associate with the Tribulation.

Maybe you've heard someone describe it as the worst period in human history.

Maybe you've wondered whether Christians will be here when it happens.

Or perhaps you've never really understood what the Tribulation is supposed to be.

That's okay.

You don't need to understand every prophetic detail to begin studying what Scripture says.

In Part One, we'll follow the main Scriptures from the message and answer one question:

What is the Tribulation, and what does it reveal about God's purposes?

You can complete this section on its own.

If you want to investigate the prophetic timeline, Israel's restoration, the Rapture, and the judgments in Revelation more carefully, Part Two: Want to Go Deeper? will take you further.

---

1. START WITH JESUS

READ: MATTHEW 24:15–22

Jesus is speaking with His disciples about events associated with the destruction of Jerusalem and His coming.

He describes a period of extraordinary distress.

In Matthew 24:21, Jesus says:

> “For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.”
>
> — Matthew 24:21, NIV

Notice what Jesus says.

This is not ordinary hardship.

It is distress unlike anything the world has experienced.

LOOK AT THE PASSAGE

What words does Jesus use to describe the severity of this time?

What does verse 22 tell you about the importance of those days being shortened?

KEY IDEA

The Tribulation isn't an idea invented by modern prophecy teachers.

Jesus Himself warned of extraordinary distress.

But we still need to investigate how His warning connects with Daniel and Revelation, and which events He was describing.

THINK ABOUT IT

Why is it important to begin with Jesus' words rather than with someone's end-times chart?

---

2. WHY DOES ISRAEL MATTER?

READ: JEREMIAH 30:4–11

Jeremiah was speaking about Israel and Judah.

His message included warnings about suffering, but also promises of restoration.

Verse 7 describes a terrible time of trouble for Jacob.

Remember that Jacob was also called Israel.

Now look carefully at the end of verse 7.

What promise accompanies the warning?

Read Jeremiah 30:10–11.

What does God promise concerning His people?

KEY IDEA

God's warnings are not the end of His promises.

In our understanding of biblical prophecy, the future Tribulation is connected with God's continuing purposes for Israel.

We believe this period will help bring Israel toward repentance, recognition of Jesus as Messiah, and eventual restoration.

But we need to distinguish between what Jeremiah explicitly says and how we connect his prophecy with future events.

REFLECT

Think about a time when you experienced God's correction.

Was His purpose simply to punish you, or was He also calling you back into a right relationship with Him?

3. WHERE DOES THE SEVEN-YEAR IDEA COME FROM?

READ: DANIEL 9:24–27

You may have heard that the Tribulation lasts seven years.

But where does that number come from?

Daniel receives a prophecy concerning seventy “sevens.”

The prophecy concerns his people and his holy city.

Verse 27 describes one “seven” and an important event occurring in the middle of it.

LOOK CLOSELY

Who is the prophecy about according to verse 24?

What happens in the middle of the final “seven” in verse 27?

KEY IDEA

The seven-year Tribulation is an interpretation developed by connecting Daniel's prophecy with other biblical passages.

In our pre-tribulation understanding, Daniel's final “seven” represents a future seven-year period.

Other Christians understand the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy differently.

The important thing is recognizing that the Bible gives us prophetic information, and we must carefully examine how that information fits together.

THINK ABOUT IT

Why is there a difference between saying:

“The Bible mentions a final seven in Daniel's prophecy”

and

“The Bible explicitly calls the Tribulation seven years long”?

---

4. WHAT ABOUT THE CHURCH?

READ: 1 THESSALONIANS 4:16–18 AND 5:1–11

In our earlier message, *The Blessed Hope*, we studied the Rapture.

We believe Jesus will gather His Church to Himself before the Tribulation begins.

This is called the **pre-tribulation Rapture**.

Now look at 1 Thessalonians 5:9.

What has God not appointed believers to suffer?

What has He appointed them to receive through Jesus Christ?

KEY IDEA

Scripture teaches that believers have hope in Jesus Christ and are not appointed to God's wrath.

Our church understands this, together with other passages, as supporting a Rapture before the Tribulation.

But the exact timing of the Rapture is a question Christians interpret differently.

Some believe the Church will experience part or all of the Tribulation.

We should be willing to examine their biblical reasoning as carefully as our own.

REFLECT

Does your confidence in Jesus depend upon knowing the precise order of future events?

Why or why not?

---

5. DOES GOD'S MERCY END DURING THE TRIBULATION?

READ: REVELATION 7:9–14

John sees an enormous multitude standing before God's throne.

Look at verse 9.

Where do these people come from?

Now read verse 14.

How are these people described?

KEY IDEA

Even amid Revelation's descriptions of judgment, we encounter people from every nation worshiping God.

Within our understanding of the prophetic timeline, this passage supports the belief that people will come to faith during the Tribulation.

God's justice is real.

But so is His mercy.

And His desire to redeem people is not limited to one nation.

THINK ABOUT IT

What does this picture of people from every nation tell you about God's heart?

---

6. YOUR PIVOT POINT

It's possible to become so focused on the future that we forget how God wants us to live today.

The purpose of studying prophecy isn't to make us fearful.

It is to strengthen our faith and help us live with confidence in God's promises.

READ: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:6–11

Paul encourages believers to remain awake, alert, and faithful.

Now bring that home.

Which statement comes closest to where you are today?

☐ I worry about the future more than I trust God with it.

☐ I have accepted things about prophecy without examining Scripture for myself.

☐ I need to remember that God's promises remain trustworthy.

☐ I sometimes confuse what the Bible says with what someone believes it means.

☐ I need to be more intentional about sharing the hope of Jesus.

☐ I trust God with the future, but I need encouragement to keep living faithfully.

What is one practical step you can take this week?

PART ONE — FINAL THOUGHT

You don't need to understand every judgment in Revelation today.

You don't need to have every prophetic event arranged on a timeline.

Start with what we've learned.

Jesus warned of extraordinary distress.

God has not abandoned His promises.

The Church's hope is in Jesus Christ.

And even when Scripture describes judgment, we see God's continuing work of redemption.

If that's enough study for today, you can stop right here.

You've followed the main biblical journey of the message.

But if you're wondering—

“Why do we believe the Tribulation lasts seven years?”

“How do Daniel and Revelation fit together?”

“What about the Christians who disagree about the Rapture?”

Then keep going.

Because now we're going deeper.

PART TWO

WANT TO GO DEEPER?

Optional Extended Study

Part One answered the basic question:

What is the Tribulation?

Now we're going to slow down.

We'll examine the passages behind the seven-year interpretation, look more carefully at Jacob's trouble, investigate the relationship between the Rapture and the Tribulation, and explore what Revelation actually describes.

There are more questions here.

More Scripture.

And more opportunities to test our conclusions.

Take your time.

You don't have to complete it in one sitting.

---

7. GO BACK TO DANIEL

READ: DANIEL 9:20–27

Before concentrating on verse 27, notice why Daniel was praying.

He had been reading Jeremiah's prophecy about Jerusalem.

He was confessing sin and asking God to show mercy to His people.

Then Gabriel brought him an extraordinary message.

LOOK AT THE CONTEXT

What concerns was Daniel expressing in his prayer?

According to verse 24, who and what are the seventy “sevens” decreed concerning?

What six purposes are listed in verse 24?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

THINK DEEPER

Our church understands the final “seven” as a future seven-year period associated with the Tribulation.

This interpretation assumes that the final period remains to be fulfilled after the earlier portions of the prophecy.

Other Christians understand the seventy “sevens” as finding their fulfillment in events surrounding Jesus' first coming and Jerusalem's subsequent history.

INVESTIGATE

Does Daniel 9 explicitly use the word *Tribulation*?

What evidence supports connecting the final “seven” with future events?

What questions remain unanswered?

8. WHY THREE AND A HALF YEARS?

Several prophetic passages contain related periods of time.

Read the following:

DANIEL 7:25

Look for the expression describing a time, times, and half a time.

DANIEL 12:7

Notice the similar expression.

REVELATION 11:2–3

Find the references to forty-two months and 1,260 days.

REVELATION 12:6, 14

Compare the descriptions of the woman's period of protection.

REVELATION 13:5

How long is the beast permitted to exercise authority?

WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU FIND

What time expressions appear repeatedly?

How do forty-two months and 1,260 days compare if a prophetic year is counted as 360 days?

KEY IDEA

In our futurist interpretation, these passages help explain the two halves of a seven-year Tribulation.

But remember that the passages appear in different prophetic contexts.

Connecting them requires interpretation.

THINK DEEPER

Why should we examine the context of each passage before assuming they all describe exactly the same event?

---

9. INVESTIGATE JACOB'S TROUBLE

READ: JEREMIAH 30–31

You don't need to read both chapters in one sitting.

As you read, look for two recurring themes:

Judgment and restoration.

Jeremiah warns about severe trouble.

But he also speaks of gathering, rebuilding, healing, forgiveness, and covenant.

LOOK FOR THE PATTERN

What does Jeremiah 30:7 say about Jacob's trouble?

What does Jeremiah 30:10–11 promise?

What does Jeremiah 31:31–34 reveal about God's promised new covenant?

THINK DEEPER

Our church understands Jacob's trouble as connected with a future period in which God will bring Israel toward restoration.

But Jeremiah was also speaking to people facing real historical circumstances.

What evidence would help you determine whether a prophecy has a historical fulfillment, a future fulfillment, or both?

Now read Romans 11:25–29.

What does Paul say about God's gifts and calling?

Why does this matter when considering God's promises to Israel?

---

10. DOES THE CHURCH GO THROUGH THE TRIBULATION?

This is one of the most debated questions in biblical prophecy.

Let's examine the passages rather than beginning with a preferred timeline.

READ THESE PASSAGES

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13–18

What happens to believers when the Lord comes?

---

1 THESSALONIANS 5:9

What does Paul say about wrath and salvation?

REVELATION 3:10

What promise does Jesus give to the church in Philadelphia?

MATTHEW 24:29–31

When does Jesus describe the gathering of His elect?

---

2 THESSALONIANS 2:1–3

What events does Paul mention while discussing the coming of Jesus and our being gathered to Him?

THREE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Question 1:

Does being protected from God's wrath necessarily mean being removed from the earth?

Question 2:

How do we distinguish persecution experienced by believers from divine judgment?

Question 3:

Are all the passages describing the same gathering, or do some describe different events?

THE DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS

Pre-tribulation: The Church is gathered to Christ before the Tribulation.

Mid-tribulation: The gathering occurs around the midpoint of the seven-year period.

Pre-wrath: Believers experience some end-times distress but are gathered before God's climactic wrath.

Post-tribulation: Believers endure the Tribulation and are gathered to Christ in connection with His visible return.

Pivot Point Church teaches the pre-tribulation position.

But understanding why we believe it requires examining the evidence and the objections.

REFLECT

Which passage do you find most persuasive?

Which passage raises the most questions?

What additional study would help you understand the different positions?

---

11. WHAT DOES REVELATION ACTUALLY DESCRIBE?

Read Revelation 6–16 over several days.

You don't have to understand every symbol.

Begin by looking for patterns.

THE SEVEN SEALS

READ: REVELATION 6:1–17 AND 8:1–5

What kinds of suffering and judgment are described?

What happens when the fifth seal is opened?

What question do the people ask in Revelation 6:17?

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

READ: REVELATION 8:6–9:21 AND 11:15–19

What areas of creation are affected?

According to Revelation 9:20–21, how do the survivors respond?

THE SEVEN BOWLS

READ: REVELATION 15–16

What do these chapters emphasize about God's judgment?

What does Revelation 16:9 reveal about the response of some people?

STEP BACK AND LOOK FOR THE PATTERN

Which themes do you notice?

☐ God's justice

☐ Human rebellion

☐ Calls to repentance

☐ Suffering

☐ Spiritual deception

☐ God's authority

☐ The endurance of believers

☐ The certainty of Christ's victory

THINK DEEPER

Does Revelation explicitly state that every vision follows the previous one in strict chronological order?

What difference would it make if some visions describe overlapping events from different perspectives?

---

12. IS THERE SALVATION DURING THE TRIBULATION?

READ: REVELATION 7:9–17

John sees an enormous multitude worshiping before God's throne.

According to verse 9, how diverse is this multitude?

What does verse 14 say about where they have come from?

What promises appear in verses 15–17?

THINK DEEPER

Our pre-tribulation interpretation understands this multitude as including people saved during the Tribulation.

But what does the passage explicitly say?

What conclusions require connecting this vision with our understanding of the Rapture and the prophetic timeline?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

What does this passage reveal about God's mercy?

---

13. PRACTICE: TEXT OR INTERPRETATION?

For each statement, determine whether Scripture explicitly teaches it or whether it is a conclusion reached by interpreting and connecting passages.

STATEMENT 1

Jesus describes a time of extraordinary distress.

☐ Explicit biblical teaching

☐ Interpretive conclusion

What passage supports your answer?

STATEMENT 2

The Tribulation will last exactly seven years.

☐ Explicitly stated in a single passage

☐ Conclusion reached by connecting passages

☐ I need to study further

What passages are used to support this interpretation?

STATEMENT 3

God has not abandoned His promises to Israel.

☐ Explicit biblical teaching

☐ Interpretive conclusion

Read Romans 11:25–29.

What do you find?

STATEMENT 4

The Church will be raptured before the Tribulation begins.

☐ Explicitly stated in a single passage

☐ Conclusion reached by connecting passages

☐ I need to study further

Which passages are commonly used to support this position?

STATEMENT 5

Revelation describes people from every nation who have come out of the great tribulation.

☐ Explicit biblical teaching

☐ Interpretive conclusion

Read Revelation 7:9–14.

What do you find?

STATEMENT 6

Every judgment in Revelation occurs in exactly the order the visions are recorded.

☐ Explicit biblical teaching

☐ Interpretive conclusion

Can you find a passage that directly establishes this?

WHY THIS MATTERS

Calling something an interpretation doesn't automatically make it wrong.

We interpret Scripture whenever we compare passages, study context, or consider the meaning of prophetic imagery.

But we need to recognize when we're drawing a conclusion.

That distinction helps us avoid presenting our understanding as though every detail were explicitly stated in a single verse.

---

14. A DEEPER PERSONAL QUESTION

Prophecy can become an intellectual exercise.

We can spend hours discussing Daniel's seventy “sevens,” the Antichrist, and the judgments in Revelation.

But Scripture calls us to something more than gathering information.

READ: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:6–11

What attitudes and actions does Paul encourage?

What does verse 11 tell believers to do for one another?

Now consider your own life.

Has studying prophecy made you more hopeful or more anxious?

Has it made you more compassionate toward people who don't know Jesus?

Is there someone you could encourage this week?

What would obedience look like?

---

15. FIVE DAYS EXPLORING THE TRIBULATION

If you'd like to continue beyond this Study Companion, use this reading plan.

DAY 1 — MATTHEW 24

Look for: What Jesus explicitly says about distress, deception, and His coming.

Ask:

What does Jesus tell His followers to do?

DAY 2 — JEREMIAH 30–31

Look for: God's warnings and promises to Israel.

Ask:

What do these chapters reveal about God's faithfulness?

DAY 3 — DANIEL 9

Look for: The context and purposes of the seventy “sevens.”

Ask:

Which details are clear, and which require interpretation?

DAY 4 — 1 THESSALONIANS 4–5

Look for: The hope believers have in Christ.

Ask:

How should that hope affect my daily life?

DAY 5 — REVELATION 7

Look for: The multitude before God's throne.

Ask:

What does this vision reveal about salvation, suffering, and God's ultimate promises?

NEXT TIME

WHO WAS DANIEL?

We've talked about Daniel's prophecy.

We've considered his seventy “sevens.”

And we've seen why his writings are so important to understanding the Tribulation.

But before we go further into his visions, there's a question we need to answer.

Who was Daniel?

He wasn't simply a man who received extraordinary predictions about the future.

He was a young exile taken from his homeland.

He lived under foreign kings.

He faced pressure to compromise his convictions.

And through it all, he remained faithful to God.

Next time, we'll look at the man behind the prophecies.

Because understanding Daniel's life helps us understand the message God entrusted to him.

TEXT FIRST. THEORY SECOND.

BEFORE YOU CLOSE THIS STUDY

Whether you completed only Part One or went all the way through Part Two, remember why we're doing this.

The goal isn't to frighten you with predictions about the future.

It isn't to make you an expert at debating end-times timelines.

It's to help you become a careful student of Scripture and a faithful follower of Jesus.

When Scripture speaks clearly—

believe it.

When interpretation is required—

study carefully.

When faithful Christians disagree—

return to the text.

And when the future seems uncertain—

remember Who holds it.

Know what you believe.

Know why you believe it.

And above all—

Keep your eyes on Jesus.