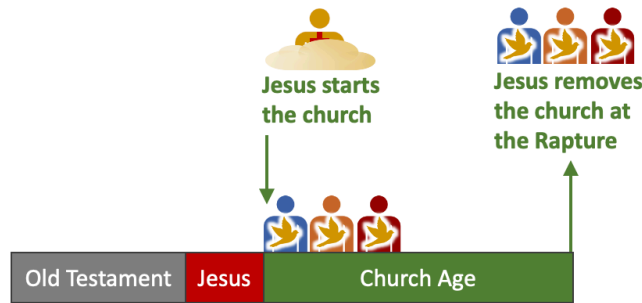


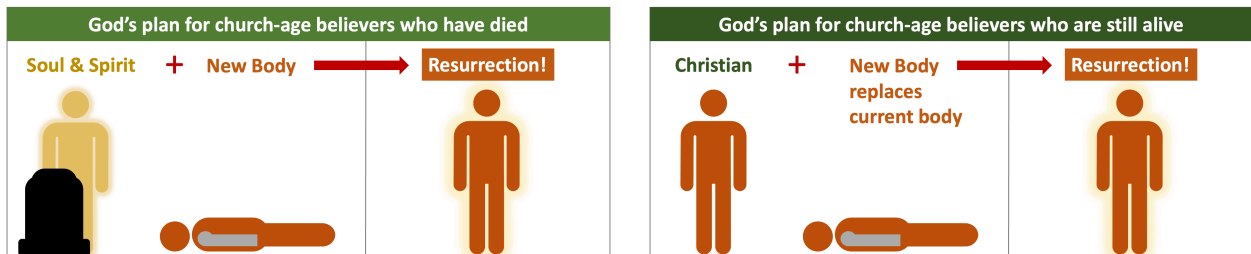
22. How the World Ends – Part 2

Previously...

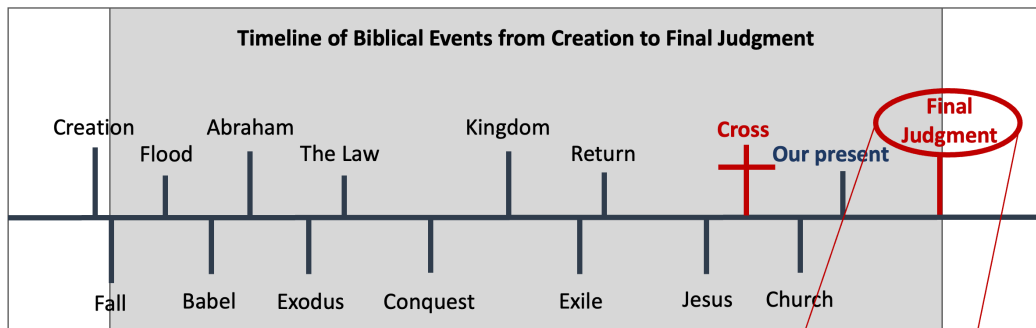
We learnt that God will end the church age with the event known as the Rapture.



At this future point in time, church-age believers in Jesus will receive their resurrection bodies.



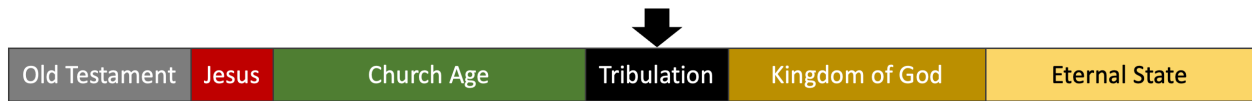
However, the Bible also says a lot more about the future. In this lesson, we will see what happens after the end of the church age.



- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 How the world came to be | 2 Why there is evil in the world | 5 God revealed His standards | 6 God taught about Himself | 9 The Saviour's work | 10 The present age |
| 3 God judged the evil world | 4 God's plan to reach the world | 7 How God's people failed | 8 God's rescue plan | 11 How the world ends | 12 God's invitation |

GOD TURNS HIS ATTENTION BACK TO ISRAEL

The next event on earth is called the Tribulation.

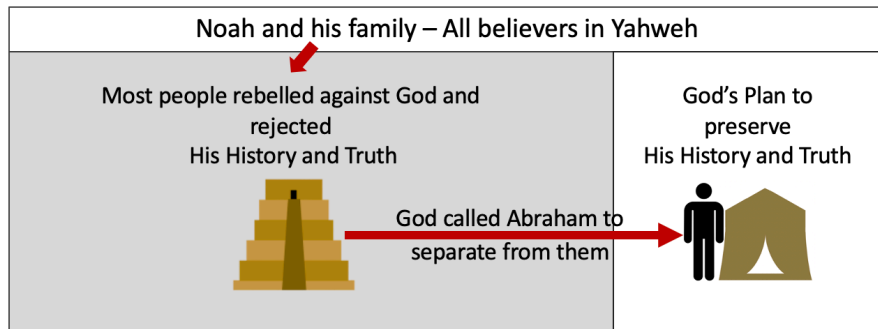


What is it? In order to understand the Tribulation, it is important for us to recall the history of national Israel. This is because the time of the Tribulation is meant for the nation of Israel.

History of national Israel

Recall that Yahweh’s original plan was to have a relationship with all mankind. But most people rebelled against Him and became increasingly evil and corrupt. God then judged all mankind with the Global Flood and “restarted” the world with righteous Noah and his family.

Unfortunately, Noah’s descendants quickly became evil and corrupt as well. The path they had chosen led to eternal death. This was not something that God wanted for them. In His mercy, Yahweh interrupted history by calling a man named Abraham.



Through Abraham and his descendants, the nation of Israel, Yahweh planned to reach and offer salvation to the unbelieving world.



The nation of Israel had a very important job to accomplish. They were to be missionaries to the world, telling everyone about God and how to be reconciled with Him and have eternal life.

In fact, God had given Israel many benefits because of this role. Paul summarised it this way.

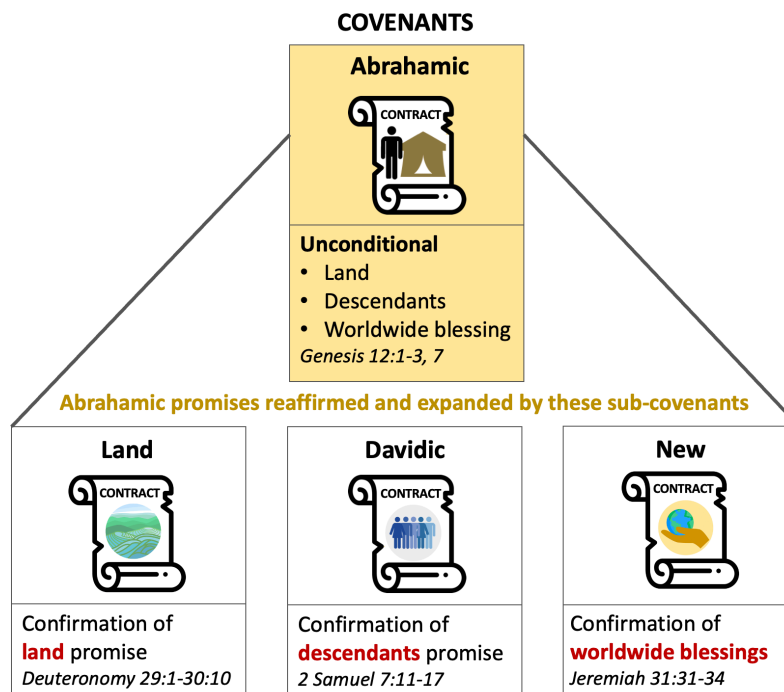
Romans 3:1–2, 9:4–5

¹ Then what’s the advantage of being a Jew? Is there any value in the ceremony of circumcision? ² Yes, there are great benefits! First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the whole revelation of God.






⁴ They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God’s adopted children. God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them his law. He gave them the privilege of worshipping him and receiving his wonderful promises. ⁵ Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are their ancestors, and Christ himself was an Israelite as far as his human nature is concerned. And he is God, the one who rules over everything and is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.

God showered these blessings on Israel because they had a worldwide job and mission. They were supposed to bring the good news of God’s salvation to the world.



In fact, God had made unconditional contracts with them. “Unconditional” means that Yahweh would definitely fulfil His promises in these contracts, no matter what happened.



To encourage Israel to take their worldwide mission and job seriously, God also made a conditional contract with them. The Mosaic Covenant promised blessings if they obeyed God and curses (or punishments) if they chose to disobey Him.

		 Mosaic Covenant
	Parties	God and the 12 tribes of Israel (sons of Jacob)
	Promises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blessings for obeying all the laws • Cursings for disobeying the laws
	Signatories	God (with the sign of the Sabbath)
	Type	Conditional

Unfortunately, Israel chose rebellion and disobedience. As a result, Yahweh eventually exiled them from their land.

 Blessings for keeping the covenant	 Cursings for breaking the covenant
Leviticus 26:1–13 (also Deuteronomy 28:1–14)	Leviticus 26:14–46 (also Deuteronomy 28:15–68)
<p>Blessings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic prosperity, good weather and cooperative nature (v4–5) • Military success and peace (v6–8) • Population growth (v9) • God’s continued presence with them (v11–12) 	<p>5 Stages of disciplines or cursings:</p> <p>Stage 1: Disease and sickness (physical and psychological), military defeat, economic disaster (v14–17)</p> <p>Stage 2: Famine (v18–20)</p> <p>Stage 3: Death of children and livestock, population decrease (v21–22)</p> <p>Stage 4: Starvation, epidemics, crushing military defeat (v23–26)</p> <p>Stage 5: Cannibalism, death, enemy invasion, exile, terror and psychological problems, God’s presence removed from them (v27–39)</p>

Instead of being the superpower of the world, as Yahweh had originally planned for Israel to be, national Israel lost their kingdom.

And while Israel was exiled, Yahweh told them through Daniel, an exiled Jew, that He was handing over political power of the world to the Gentiles. (Daniel recorded what he was told in the Old Testament book of Daniel.)

Through a vision, Yahweh gave Daniel information on world history that would span from 603 BC to the return of the Kingdom of God on earth in the future (Lesson 14, pages 6–9).



God explained that He would allow a series of kingdoms to rule the world. These would be successive versions, or generations, of the kingdom of man: Babylon, the co-kingdoms of the Medes and Persians, Greece and then Rome. The Romans were in power when Jesus first arrived.

Through other Scripture writers, Yahweh said that because national Israel would continue to be rebellious, He would set Israel aside for a time and introduce the church age.

(Recall that Jesus delayed the return of the Kingdom of God because national Israel rejected Him at His first coming. See Lesson 19, pages 2–4.)

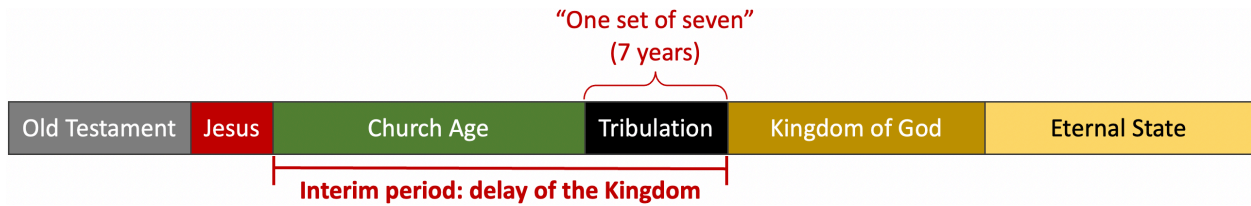
But at His timing, God would end the church age with the Rapture. After that, He would turn to deal with rebellious national Israel through a special time of punishment known as the Tribulation. In describing this future time, this was what the prophet Jeremiah recorded.

Jeremiah 30:7a

In all history there has never been such a time of terror.

It will be a time of trouble for my people Israel.

The prophet Daniel recorded information about this “time of trouble”. Among the details, he wrote that the Tribulation would last seven years.



During this period, a ruler, who would come to be known as the Antichrist (or false Christ), would make a treaty with Israel. This treaty would allow the Jews to worship and make sacrifices at their Temple.

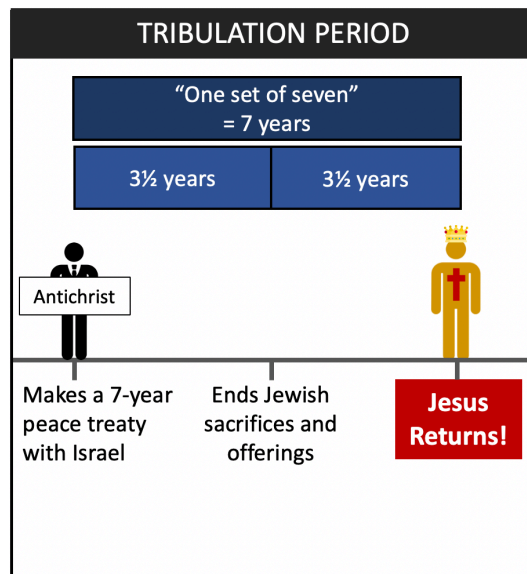


Daniel 9:27







The ruler will make a treaty with the people for a period of one set of seven, but after half this time, he will put an end to the sacrifices and offerings. And as a climax to all his terrible deeds, he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration, until the fate decreed for this defiler is finally poured out on him.”

Halfway through the seven years, at the three-and-a-half (3½) year mark, the Antichrist would break the treaty by desecrating the Jewish Temple. He would stop all Jewish worship and sacrifices and cause great suffering and persecution among the Jews.

However, Jesus would return at the end of the seventh year to judge this evil ruler.



This set of seven years, the Tribulation, is the period of “the feet of iron and clay” in the statue vision that Yahweh had earlier revealed. The Antichrist will be in charge of the ruling kingdom or government at the time of the Tribulation.

Part of the Statue	The Kingdom it Represents	Notes
 Head of gold	The kingdom of Babylon.	This information pleased Nebuchadnezzar. It was his kingdom which has now passed.
 Chest and arms of silver	The co-kingdoms of the Medes and Persians.	This kingdom has passed. (It occurs in the later part of the books of Daniel and Esther.)
 Belly and thighs of bronze	The empire of Greece.	This kingdom has passed. It was initially led by Alexander the Great.
 The legs of iron	The Roman Empire.	This kingdom was present throughout the time of the New Testament.
(The Church Age: Our present. There is a pause in God’s plan for Israel.)		
 The feet of mixed iron and clay	A future kingdom that is some form of revived Roman Empire.	This has not happened yet. It is in the future. This is the time of the Tribulation.
 The crushing rock not cut by human hands	This is God’s Kingdom, headed by the Saviour.	It comes to smash the Kingdom of Man. This has not yet happened. It is in the future.

A 7-year period.

Yahweh gave Israel all this information through Daniel more than 400 years before Jesus arrived on earth.

When Jesus finally arrived, the Jews rejected Him. Then Jesus went to the cross and delayed the return of the Kingdom.



After Jesus ascended into heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to start the church on earth.

During this church age, Jesus is focused on working with the church. Why? He has given the church (which is made up of believing Gentiles and Jews) the temporary job of being missionaries to the world.



Yahweh loves mankind and while national Israel was supposed to be the missionaries to the world, they had failed to do their job well.

Instead, God called upon Jesus’ body, the church, to temporarily take on that role. This was so that mankind would hear the good news about Yahweh’s offer of eternal life and be given the opportunity to put their faith in Jesus.

This was what Paul said.

Ephesians 2:14, 16–18

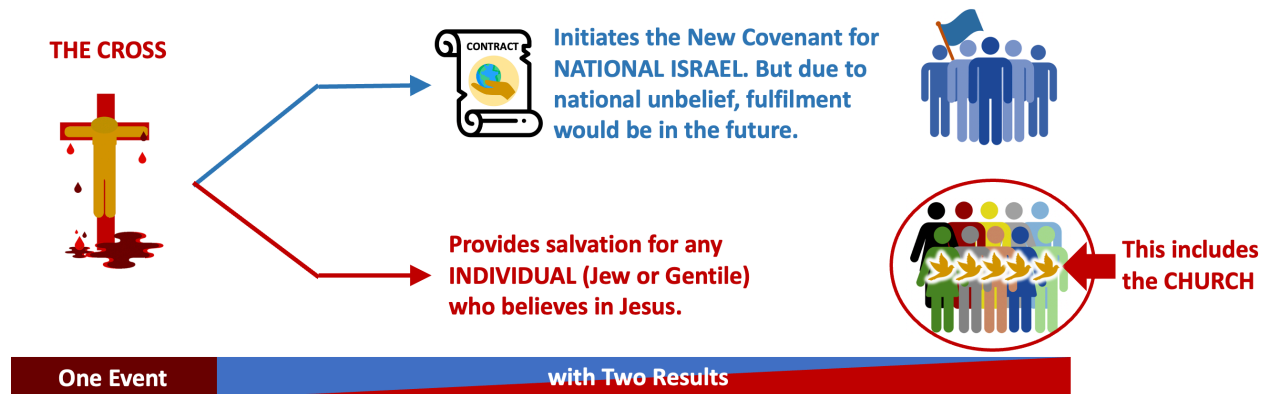
¹⁴ For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.

¹⁶ Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death. ¹⁷ He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near.

¹⁸ Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.



Through His work on the cross, Jesus is bringing individual believing Jews and individual believing Gentiles into one body called the church. But the church age will not go on indefinitely.



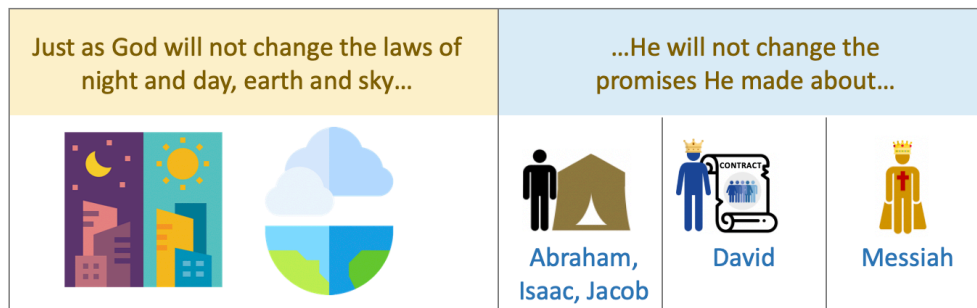
God made unconditional contracts with Israel that He will definitely fulfil. Yahweh wants everyone to know that He is not just a promise-maker, but a promise-keeper too. He will also be able to forgive Israel’s sins and fulfil His promises to the nation through the work of Jesus on the cross.

This is why Yahweh made the prophet Jeremiah record His response to people who might say that He had forgotten all about Israel.

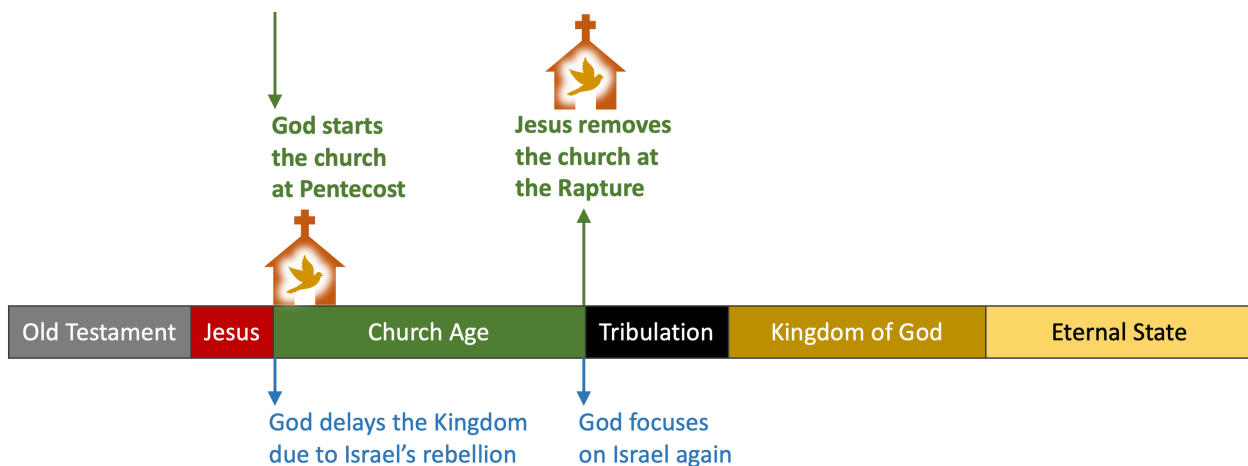
This was what Jeremiah wrote.

Jeremiah 33:23–26

²³ The LORD gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, ²⁴ “Have you noticed what people are saying?— ‘The LORD chose Judah and Israel and then abandoned them!’ They are sneering and saying that Israel is not worthy to be counted as a nation. ²⁵ But this is what the LORD says: I would no more reject my people than I would change my laws that govern night and day, earth and sky. ²⁶ I will never abandon the descendants of Jacob or David, my servant, or change the plan that David’s descendants will rule the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Instead, I will restore them to their land and have mercy on them.”



When will Yahweh turn His attention back to national Israel? After Jesus removes the church at the Rapture.



Throughout Israel’s 4,000 years of history, they have never been fully obedient to Yahweh. Even today, the nation of Israel rejects their Messiah Jesus. What would cause them to repent and come to faith? The Bible says the Tribulation will be what causes Israel to finally repent of all their rebellion against the Creator-God.

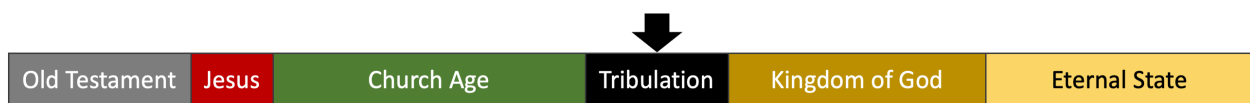
Israel will come to believe in Jesus through the Tribulation

When Yahweh first formed the nation of Israel, He told them about this future time of Tribulation.

Deuteronomy 4:30–31

³⁰ “In the distant future, when you are suffering all these things, you will finally return to the LORD your God and listen to what he tells you. ³¹ For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon you or destroy you or forget the solemn covenant he made with your ancestors.

He said that He would punish Israel so severely for their continued rebellion against Him that they would finally repent as a nation.

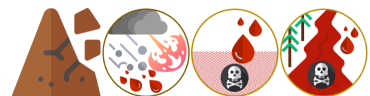
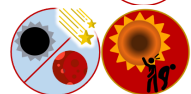


Did God give any details about the Tribulation? Yes. He gave a lot of information. Here is a summary.

1. Yahweh will send very severe judgments on Israel and all the unbelievers on the earth at that time.

The final book of the New Testament is called Revelation. It provides lots of details about the seven-year Tribulation. Revelation says it will be a time filled with political manoeuvring, supernatural, geophysical catastrophes and a lot of death. Yahweh makes it very clear that once again, He is the one judging the world. Here are some of the things that will happen.

- **War:** There will be great wars on earth involving many nations.
- **Hyperinflation:** Worldwide inflation will be so great that one day's wages will only be able to buy a loaf of bread.
- **Death:** More than 50% of the world's population will die.
- **Geophysical catastrophes:** Strange things will happen in space such as the sun turning black, the moon turning red, the stars falling from the skies and the sun scorching people with unbearable heat.
- **Disasters:** There will be earthquakes so great that the world's mountains will be flattened and the islands will cease to exist. The vegetation of the world will be destroyed. The oceans and all fresh water on the planet will turn into blood. From the sky, hailstones as heavy as 50 kilograms (110 pounds) will fall. Yahweh Himself will destroy the entire environment, nature and climate.

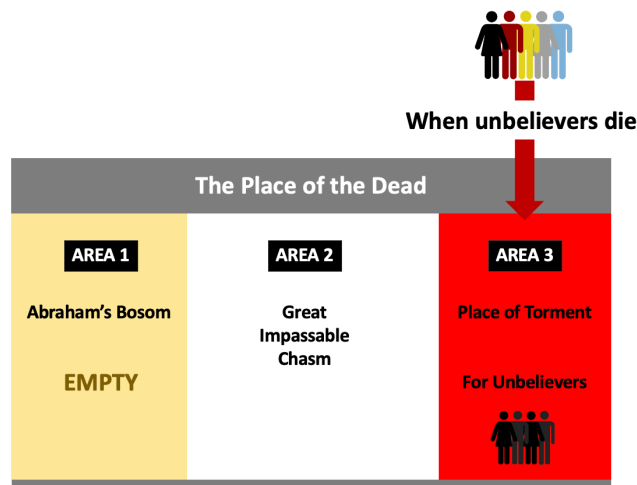


- **Supernatural judgments:** Some of the judgments that God will send will be truly supernatural. For example, during a five-month period, the people on the earth will be tortured so severely with pain like that from scorpion stings, that they will desire but won't be able to kill themselves to escape the pain.
- **The one-world political and religious leaders:** Yahweh will allow Satan to raise a one-world ruler called the Antichrist (or false Christ). He will start off as a peacemaker, using diplomacy to bring peace to the Middle East and particularly to the Jews. However, together with another man known as the false prophet (who will be another evil person raised by Satan), they will institute a one-world government and one-world religion. They will remove all other governments and all religions of the world. There will be great deception across the world during this time.



Everyone will be told to submit themselves to these two leaders and worship the Antichrist as god. If they refuse, they will not be able to trade or buy food.

Because of all these events, many people will die during the Tribulation. The unbelievers who die will join all other unbelievers from throughout history in the place of the dead.

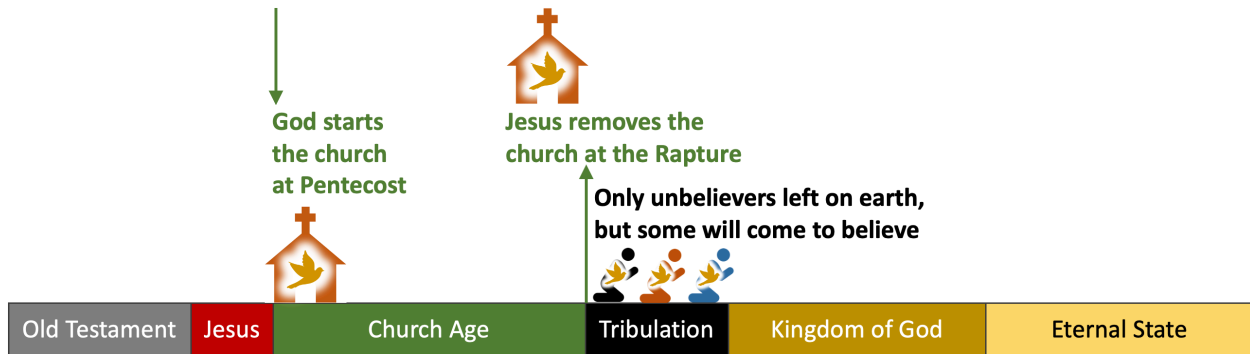


2. In the time after the Rapture and throughout the Tribulation, people will come to believe in Jesus as their Saviour.

All believers would have left the earth at the Rapture. But after that event, among the people left on earth, there will be those who will subsequently come to faith in Jesus.

Many of these new believers will die during the Tribulation. They will then go to heaven to be with Jesus.





Importantly, there will be Jews (descendants of the nation of Israel) who will also come to faith in Jesus. In fact, from among these believing Jews, Yahweh will commission a group to continue telling people about Him, giving the world the opportunity to be saved. Yahweh will supernaturally protect this group of Jews so they will remain alive throughout the Tribulation.

3. Many other people on the earth will refuse to repent of their wickedness.

The Bible tells us that even while the world is being destroyed and billions of people are being killed, many who recognise that Yahweh is sending these judgments will refuse to repent of their sin and wickedness.

These people will not pretend that the worldwide disasters are “natural” or “man-made”. They will not pretend there is no God. They know there is a God. And they know that He is judging the world. But they will persistently refuse to acknowledge Him.

They will curse God and rebel all the way to their eternal doom. This is how Yahweh says the people will behave.

Revelation 16:9, 11, 21

⁹ Everyone was burned by this blast of heat, and they cursed the name of God, who had control over all these plagues. They did not repent of their sins and turn to God and give him glory.

¹¹ and they cursed the God of heaven for their pains and sores. But they did not repent of their evil deeds and turn to God.

²¹ There was a terrible hailstorm, and hailstones weighing as much as seventy-five pounds fell from the sky onto the people below. They cursed God because of the terrible plague of the hailstorm.



4. At the end of the Tribulation, Jesus will return to earth.

Jesus' Second Coming



At the end of this seven-year period, Jesus returns visibly and dramatically in triumph and victory. Everyone on earth will see Him with their own eyes. This is what Jesus Himself said.



Matthew 24:27–30

²⁷ For as the lightning flashes in the east and shines to the west, so it will be when the Son of Man comes. ²⁸ Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs indicate that the end is near.

²⁹ “Immediately after the anguish of those days,

the sun will be darkened,
the moon will give no light,
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

³⁰ And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

When Jesus returns, all unbelievers on the earth will mourn because they know their time is up. Jesus has come and He will judge them.

Jesus will physically land on the Mount of Olives just outside Jerusalem. His second coming will be so dramatic that the mountain will split apart and the entire cosmos will change. There is no mistaking Jesus' second coming. The whole world will know. The prophet Zechariah wrote about it.

Zechariah 14:4, 5b–7

⁴ On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. And the Mount of Olives will split apart, making a wide valley running from east to west. Half the mountain will move toward the north and half toward the south. ⁵ Then the LORD my God will come, and all his holy ones with him.

⁶ On that day the sources of light will no longer shine,
⁷ yet there will be continuous day! Only the LORD knows how this could happen. There will be no normal day and night, for at evening time it will still be light.



Jesus will not be alone when He returns. He will come with His angels and the resurrected church.

Jesus Himself spoke about the angels coming with Him.

Matthew 25:31

“But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne.



And Paul wrote about the resurrected, church-age believers—Jesus’ “holy people”—coming back to the earth with Him.







1 Thessalonians 3:13

May he, as a result, make your hearts strong, blameless, and holy as you stand before God our Father when our Lord Jesus comes again with all his holy people. Amen.



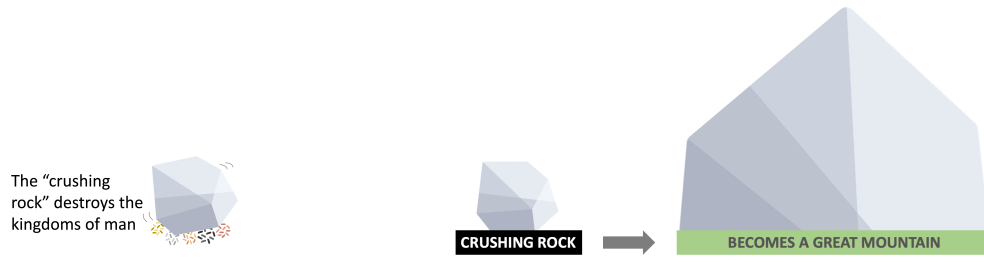
God had also told the Old Testament prophet Daniel about Jesus’ second coming in the vision of the statue. After the rule of the Gentile kingdoms, Jesus (who was pictured as the “crushing rock” in the vision) will end the rule of the Gentile kingdoms of man.

The fact that the rock is not made by human hands means God Himself will bring about the end of the kingdoms of man.

Part of the Statue	The Kingdom it Represents	Notes
 Head of gold	The kingdom of Babylon.	This information pleased Nebuchadnezzar. It was his kingdom which has now passed.
 Chest and arms of silver	The co-kingdoms of the Medes and Persians.	This kingdom has passed. (It occurs in the later part of the books of Daniel and Esther.)
 Belly and thighs of bronze	The empire of Greece.	This kingdom has passed. It was initially led by Alexander the Great.
 The legs of iron	The Roman Empire.	This kingdom was present throughout the time of the New Testament.
(The Church Age: Our present. There is a pause in God’s plan for Israel.)		
 The feet of mixed iron and clay	A future kingdom that is some form of revived Roman Empire.	This has not happened yet. It is in the future. This is the time of the Tribulation.
 The crushing rock not cut by human hands	This is God’s Kingdom, headed by the Saviour.	It comes to smash the Kingdom of Man. This has not yet happened. It is in the future.

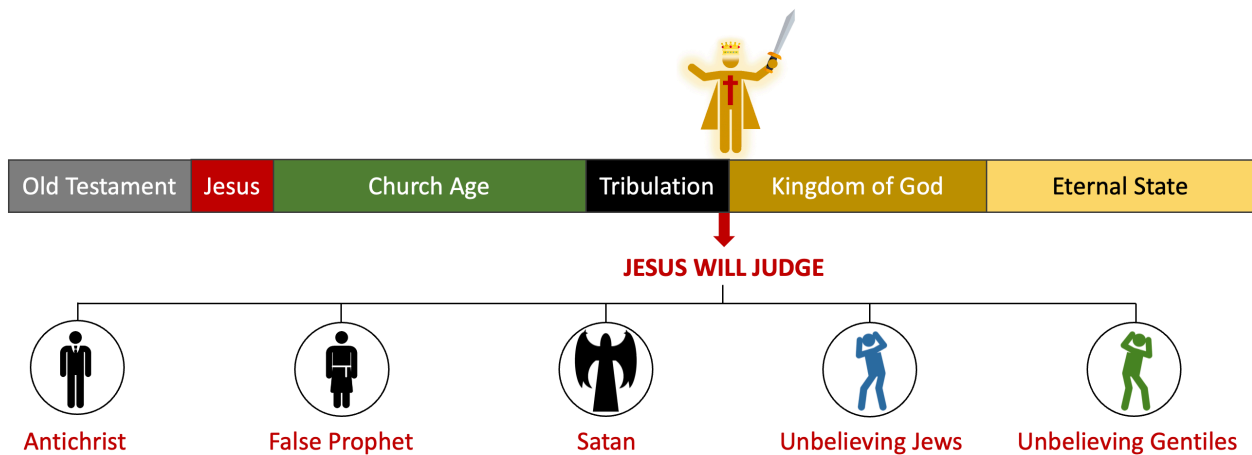
A 7-year period.

After this crushing rock destroys the statue, it grows to be a mountain that dominates the world. God is saying that Jesus will bring in His own Kingdom—the Kingdom of God—on earth.



5. Jesus will judge all who are left on the earth.

These are the people Jesus will judge when He returns.



How will Jesus judge them?

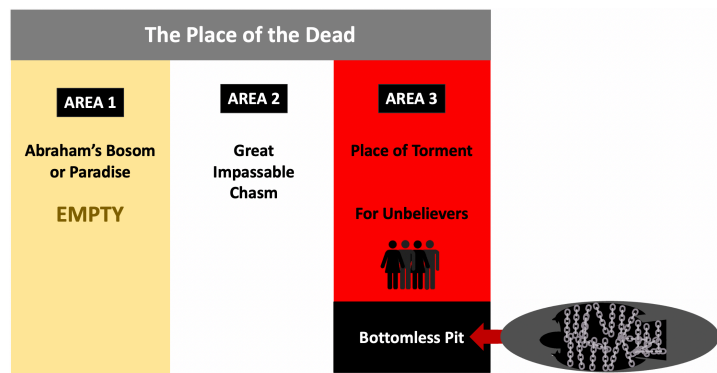
Antichrist and the false prophet: Jesus will throw them alive into the lake of fire.



Satan: Jesus will get one of His angels to throw Satan into a special, temporary prison meant only for evil spirit beings. Satan will be locked up there for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:2–3a

² He seized the dragon—that old serpent, who is the devil, Satan—and bound him in chains for a thousand years. ³ The angel threw him into the bottomless pit, which he then shut and locked so Satan could not deceive the nations anymore until the thousand years were finished.



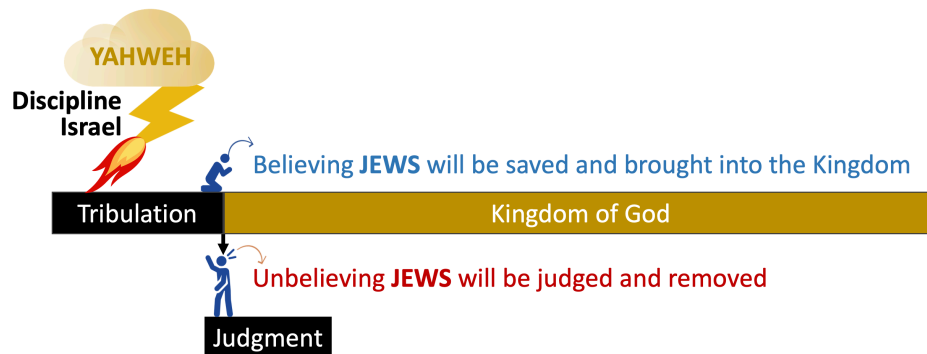
Unbelieving Jews: God will judge and remove all rebellious Jews who continue in their unbelief. None of them will get to enter the Kingdom that Jesus is bringing back. They will be confined in the place of the dead where they await their final judgment.

This is how the prophet Ezekiel wrote of this event.

Ezekiel 20:34–38 (NIV)

³⁴ I will bring you from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered—with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath. ³⁵ I will bring you into the wilderness of the nations and there, face to face, I will execute judgment upon you. ³⁶ As I judged your ancestors in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will judge you, declares the Sovereign LORD. ³⁷ I will take note of you as you pass under my rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.

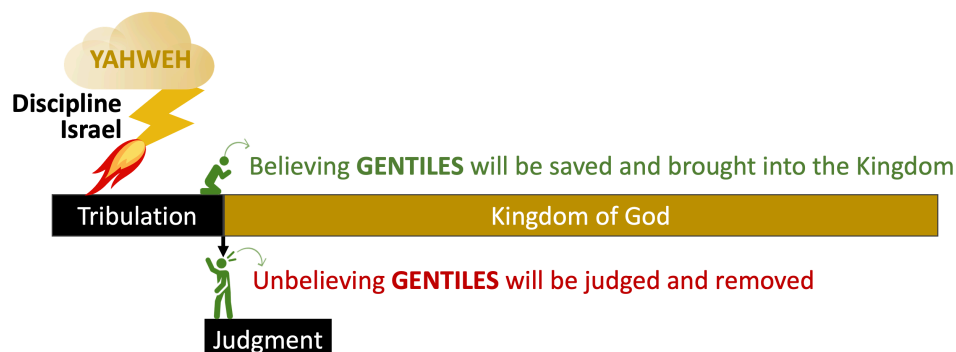
³⁸ I will purge you of those who revolt and rebel against me. Although I will bring them out of the land where they are living, yet they will not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.



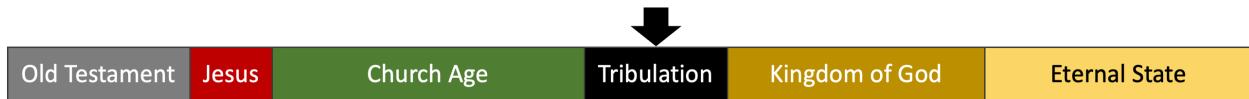
Unbelieving Gentiles: Jesus will also judge the Gentiles and separate them into two groups. He will remove the group of unbelieving Gentiles (whom He calls goats) but will save the group of Gentiles who believe in Him (whom He calls sheep).

Matthew 25:31–32

³¹ “But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.



The time of the Tribulation is a significant event in the future. But that also is not the end of human history.



What happens next?

After the Tribulation comes the thousand-year Kingdom of God on this earth. What is the Kingdom of God on earth like? We will learn more in the next lesson.



Bible reading for review
Matthew 24–25

Background to Matthew 24–25

Nearing the end of the time when Jesus was on earth during His first coming, His disciples asked Him for the signs of His second coming. Jesus provided many details about the state of the world and the events that will precede His physical return to the earth. Chapters 24 and 25 of the Gospel of Matthew are a record of Jesus' summary of the upcoming Tribulation period and His second coming. Jesus described the supernatural and geophysical catastrophes that are coming. He also used parables to describe how Israel should get ready for His return and He also explained how He will judge the peoples of the world when He returns.