

## *Chapter 4*

### *The Great Controversy The Great Tribulation versus the Great Day of the Lord*

We have now come to the meat of this small book.

To understand Revelation it is necessary to understand two things:

1. The Tribulation
2. The Rapture

A person's belief regarding these two teachings dictates how he will perceive the rest of Revelation. It is essential, therefore, that you understand exactly what these are, what they describe, and what they talk about. There is one more term that I am compelled to add to this short list. It is:

3. The Day of the Lord

With these three things clearly understood, you will have little difficulty understanding the book of Revelation.

The Rapture is a single event that happens within a twinkling of an eye. But the other two terms, the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord describe much longer periods of time. The Rapture is tied to both of them. But how? In what way? The majority of this chapter will discuss that.

First of all, let's define the Rapture:

The Rapture (which is not a Biblical word, but a descriptive word that means 'a snatching away') is a puzzling event to most people. The Bible clearly talks about it in *1 Corinthians 15:51-58*, *1 Thessalonians 4:13-18* and *Matthew 24:29 to Matthew 25:30*. As a Biblical truth, it is an undeniable fact. IT WILL HAPPEN. Jesus will take all His elect out of the world. It will be as if they just disappeared.

The difficulty is in isolating the event in Revelation. This is the great controversy.

Over the centuries, the explanations for the Book of Revelation have become more complex, more distorted, and more abused than one would generally expect. The reason for this is simple: since the book describes events yet to happen, we have no historical record to check against our theology. It allows for speculation and innovation on behalf of the reader. In an attempt to avoid these mistakes, I will follow these three simple rules throughout this book:

1. *All scripture must agree. If it does not, we have a contradiction that would discredit everything.*

2. *We must try to do away with assumptions. A thesis that is built on assumptions is inherently flawed at its foundation, and must alter the simple meaning of other verses in order to fit the prevailing concept. I do not think that taking the simple meaning of a verse and making it into something more complex is rightly dividing the Word of Truth—it is an erroneous way to study the Bible.*
3. *The Bible will explain itself. At times, there are passages that seem to make little sense. In such cases, there is another passage of Scripture that will explain it satisfactorily. If we rely on this, we will do away with personal interpretations of Scripture.*

Interestingly enough all the prevailing beliefs have a common assumption, that, to my knowledge, has not been viewed Biblically.

The wrongful assumption of what the ‘Great Tribulation’ really is has caused nearly all the problems!

A result of this misunderstanding—and the assumptions attached to it—has led to these problems:

1. Misunderstanding of Scripture regarding the ‘Great Tribulation’.
2. A failure to properly pinpoint *when* the Rapture actually occurs in the Book of Revelation.
3. A complex and confusing explanation of Matthew 24, Luke 21, Mark 13 and the entire Book of Revelation itself.
4. Created belief structures so riddled with twisted explanations that it gives rise to contradictory and inflammatory beliefs—Pre-Trib, Post-Trib, Mid-Trib views, and Preterist.
5. Twisting of Scripture to fit a belief instead of allowing Scripture to determine belief.
6. Gave rise to bizarre and wild interpretations and beliefs of future events.
7. Created unnecessary confusion.

I sat on an ordination board once that was made up of local pastors. We were to question a young man on his beliefs to determine if we were to ordain him. We all knew the young man, so at first our questions were more in the nature of teasing than any real search for doctrinal errors. Until, that is, someone asked about the Rapture. The question was like dry wood to a fire. Within the space of five minutes, every one of the preachers involved were arguing over various interpretations of Scripture as they saw it. This went on for an hour and a half until a truce was called since no one would yield their opinion. There was only one thing that everyone had in common, and it was the assumed foundation for so many varied beliefs that I felt overwhelmed just listing to it all. *Interestingly, it was the common denominator of the Tribulation that was also the source of their contradictory beliefs!*

We know from reading Revelation that a period of seven years will elapse during which God will pour out His wrath on an unjust and unholy world that has rejected Him, His Son, His Word and His people. It is a time of vengeance. It is a time of horror and destruction. It is a time of fear and

hatred. It is a time where Satan comes to full power in the body of the Anti-Christ and the unholy Trinity. It will be horrible.

And it will last for seven years.

To be honest I think the key to understanding the Rapture and to understanding Revelation lies in the proper understanding of the word ‘Tribulation’.

I believe it is the misuse of this word that has created so much diversity about *Revelation*, *Matthew 24-25*, *Mark 13* and *Luke 21*.

What many call ‘The Great Tribulation’, in fact should NOT be called by that name.

It is deceptive and, I believe, has led to many misunderstandings, false explanations of Scripture, and general confusion.

As I already mentioned in the introduction, I was dismayed when I attempted to prove scripturally what I had been always taught was true. In fact, the Holy Spirit so forbade such a haphazard approach to His Word, that I was forced to throw everything that I thought I knew out and start from scratch.

Even so far as to challenge exactly what the Scripture meant when it mentioned the ‘Tribulation’.

*To my extreme satisfaction, when I, at last, got my mind settled on this one issue, my understanding fell into place as if someone had turned on a light bulb. It suddenly all began to make sense. My study from that point on was easy and exciting. I no longer had to explain away certain verses. I no longer struggled with the cohesiveness of the Scriptures regarding prophecy. It all came together as if the Holy Spirit was putting the puzzle together...instead of me. How wonderful...it actually reads like the rest of the Bible does! And I can study it like I study the rest of Scripture...line upon line, precept upon precept...instead of pinball fashion.*

There are 25 verses in the Bible that use the word ‘tribulation’ and only two verses uses it in reference to the lost or heathen people!

Here are the two that mention heathen or lost people:

Romans 2:9

2 Thessalonians 1:6

Every other verse in Scripture—including the FIVE references in Revelation—talks about the Jews suffering or Christians suffering Tribulation. Here is the list:

Deuteronomy 4:30

Matthew 24:21

Romans 5:3

Judges 10:14

Matthew 24:29

Romans 8:35

1 Samuel 10:19

Mark 13:24

Romans 12:12

1 Samuel 26:24

John 16:33

2 Corinthians 1:4

Matthew 13:21

Acts 14:22

2 Corinthians 2:7

Ephesians 3:13  
1 Thessalonians 3:4  
2 Thessalonians 1:4

Revelation 1:9  
Revelation 2:9  
Revelation 2:10

Revelation 2:22  
Revelation 7:14

Of these, only THREE actually mention the entire phrase of ‘Great Tribulation’. They are:

Matthew 24:21      Revelation 2:22      Revelation 7:14

It is also of interest to note that the word ‘tribulation’ appears only five times in the entire book of Revelation. One where John mentions that *he is in tribulation* and three which appear in the letters written to the various CHURCHES (between chapters 2 and 4) and only ONCE after chapter 4! And in all FIVE cases the subject of the tribulation are Saints or Christians.

Why do people use the word ‘tribulation’ to describe the main events in Revelation? Primarily because of ONE short passage that is not even found in Revelation, but in Matthew 24:21-22.

**Matthew 24:21-22** – *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 – And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.*

I would have you notice, however, verse 22. It clearly states that the days of the Great Tribulation will be shortened *for the elect's sake!* Again, the verse pertains to Christians or Jews, but not to the devastation contained in the seven years spoken of in Revelation.

The misunderstanding of that one passage has led to a host of confusion, theories, false doctrine and division. The following chapters will help dispel any doubts you may have about this passage. I take the verses one at a time out of Matthew 24 and discuss them in the next Chapter, so keep on reading.

### **A better Scriptural term to describe the seven years in Revelation is ‘The Day of the Lord!’**

Instead of using tribulation, I believe we ought to use ‘The Day of the Lord’. This, reading Scripture, is how God describes it.

1. Isaiah 13:6-9 tells us that it will be a time of destruction, cruel, of great wrath and fierce anger, where He shall destroy the sinners.
2. Jeremiah 46:10 tells us that the day is to avenge God of His adversaries.
3. Zephaniah 1:7-8 tells us that it will be a sacrifice (a killing) and that guest will be bidden, compare to Rev 19:17-18.
4. 2 Peter 3:10 tells us that the Day of the Lord will bring about the end of the heavens and the earth, compare to Rev 21:1.

The phrase ‘the Day of the Lord’ is found in 29 verses and is almost exclusively attached to destruction, death and vengeance on the heathen. Here is the list of verses:

Isaiah 2:12	Joel 2:31	Zechariah 13:1
Isaiah 13:6	Joel 3:14	Malachi 4:5
Isaiah 13:9	Amos 5:18	Acts 2:20
Isaiah 32:8	Amos 5:20	1 Corinthians 5:5
Jeremiah 46:10	Obadiah 1:15	2 Corinthians 1:14
Lamentations 2:22	Zephaniah 1:8	1 Thessalonians 5:2
Ezekiel 13:5	Zephaniah 1:14	2 Peter 3:10
Ezekiel 30:3	Zephaniah 1:18	Revelation 6:17
Joel 1:15	Zephaniah 2:2	Revelation 16:
Joel 2:11	Zephaniah 2:3	

Consider how the wrath of God is described in Revelation itself.

1. In Revelation 6:17 the Bible says ‘for the great DAY of his wrath is come.’ It is interesting that they describe it as the Great Day instead of the Great Tribulation. This happens just before the flood gates are opened in Revelation Chapter 8 with the 7 trumpets.
2. In Revelation 16:14 the Bible says ‘to gather them to the battle of that GREAT DAY of God Almighty.’ Thus we see again the term ‘Great Day’ instead of ‘Great Tribulation’. The book of Revelation uses the word ‘Great day’ or the ‘day of God Almighty’ to describe the destruction and wrath of God on this world...not the word ‘tribulation’.

The difference between the two terms is obvious to me. To attach ‘tribulation’ to the seven years of Revelation is not consistent with scripture, and can quickly lead to misunderstandings of the scriptures. ‘The Day of the Lord’ is a much better fit. It is God’s time...it is the Lord’s Day! It is where Jesus takes over. It is where no longer does man have a free reign to work unrighteousness, or Satan his freedom any longer.

Truly, Revelation is the moment of God’s triumph more than it is a time of tribulation to lost people!

I believe, also, that the Rapture is a part of this Day of the Lord, and is the event that kicks off this seven year period. Consider 2 Thessalonians 2:2-12.

The main question, however, regarding the Day of the Lord is where does the Rapture take place? Does it take place BEFORE or does it take place DURING or does it take place AFTER this seven year period? The answer to this would give us some idea of what to expect. If Christians are going to live through that time, we must be prepared for that. If we are going to be taken out before hand then we also must help prepare others for that as well. It is important.

But now that we have a good idea of what the word ‘tribulation’ and ‘Day of the Lord’ indicate. We can build upon this foundation. Instead of building upon assumptions of what the words refer to, we instead, have made a strong Biblical case for what the terms refer to.

This changes everything, and you may be asking yourself, “What then is the Great Tribulation if it isn’t the seven years of God’s wrath in Revelation?” Watch.