***The Tribulation Period, No. 1

RV46-01***

We are studying the letter to the church in Philadelphia in Revelation 3:7-13, number 13. The Lord Jesus Christ promises to this church to keep an open door for their witnessing relative to the proclamation of His divine truth. Biblical believers are always opposed by Satan through various religious organizations. In the city of Philadelphia, we've seen that there was a Jewish synagogue which claimed to be the true representatives of God. But the Lord Jesus Christ says that they are not that at all. They were indeed a synagogue of Satan, and they were, in fact, not really genuine Jews. It was a false claim, and He identified them as being liars for claiming to be Jews when they were rejecting Jesus Christ. The reason he did this is because Abraham is the pattern of a genuine Jew. Abraham received Jesus Christ as the Son of God. He viewed Jesus Christ as true deity. Nobody can be a Jew who does not have the same attitude toward Jesus Christ that Abraham possessed. Abraham had it in a preview. They had it in the actual relationships and association, seeing Him in action and listening to Him, and yet, they rejected Him.

The physical descent is not enough to make one a child of God. The Philadelphia believers who trusted in Jesus Christ are the real representatives of God on earth. Today that group is known as fundamentalists. They're known as biblical Christians. They have one thing in common. They use the Word of God as being the inerrant revelation from God, and they receive it as the final authority in all that it touches and all that it deals with. What it reveals about the person of Jesus Christ is that He is indeed the God-man. Consequently, they receive Him and as such.

These people possess then the truth of the deity of Jesus Christ. The Philadelphia type possesses the completed canon of Scripture, and they evaluate it. They value it as the Word of God. They possess a bride relationship to Jesus Christ, which you remember was never true before of any other group of saints, and never will be again. It's only those born within the restrictions of the church age that have this relationship to the Son of God. They possess the means of justification which Abraham possessed: justification by faith. They are now members of the royal family of God.

The Lord Jesus promises that when He returns to this earth, the Christ-rejecting Jews, as well as the gentiles, will do homage at the feet of these Christians. Then everyone will learn how dear the Philadelphia fundamental type Christian is to the Lord Jesus Christ. He may not appear to value them that highly. These Christians may not appear to be that dear to Him at this point. All the world now is going to be asking the question: why should a Christian like Chester Bitterman have to die in the prime of life, with great potential linguistic capacities and great contributions to make to the church? Why should a group of mangy stinking terrorists, who have nothing to offer the world but their own foul concepts and ideas, cut down one of the representatives of the Philadelphia type church? But, indeed, the time is coming when it will be demonstrated that nothing has happened to Mr. Bitterman. There is a temporary break in his status and his relationship. There is a fracture in his family relationship. There is a certain basic upsetting. But nothing has happened to Chet Bitterman. He is in the finest state that he'll ever be in. And when he returns, the people who took his life will be licking the dust of the ground at his feet. Don't ever forget that that's the relationship that Jesus Christ is trying to convey to us today.

We may suffer rejection and ridicule, and indeed we do, from a sophisticated and powerful humanist society. But we are going to experience an exaltation later, as the personal bride of Jesus Christ, that is hard even now to imagine.

Now, I direct your attention to Revelation 3:10: "Because you have kept the word of my patience." John continues in quoting the dictation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "because" is the Greek word "hoti." This expresses a cause. It explains why the church saints are to be preserved from something that He is about to announce that they are going to be preserved from. This is a very fascinating verse in the Bible because it answers one of the major questions that everybody who knows anything at all about church history inevitably asks. If you know anything about where society is moving today, where the world is moving today, sooner or later, as a Christian, this question will come to your mind, and I'm happy to say that the Lord Jesus answers it here in this verse.

He says, "Because there was something about them, and that is that they kept something. The word kept is the Greek word "tereo." The word "tereo" here actually means "to obey." It's aorist tense – at the point when they came into contact with the Word of God. It is active. These believers themselves were the positive volition type. It's indicative – a statement of fact. What they kept is called the "word." That's the Greek word "logos," which is a noun that is used as a symbol for a thought – the expression of a thought, and particularly, this is described as "the word of patience." The word "patience" looks like this: "hupomone." This word means "a patient enduring," or "a standing firm under pressure. In the Greek, again, Jesus Christ includes the personal word for "I" – the word "ego." He wants to stress that He is referring to something about Himself: *My* perseverance. They have kept the word relative to the perseverance of Jesus Christ. The word of patience refers to the patient enduring which was demonstrated by the Lord Jesus Christ under a variety of satanic pressures. It refers to the teachings of the Lord to His believers relative to maintaining spiritual stability in the face of opposition to divine viewpoint truth.

That is one of the hardest times to maintain spiritual civility – when people are fighting you; and, when people are striking back at divine viewpoint truth that you're trying to share with them. Many times (and it happens so regularly), people come to me and I can see that they have a certain sense of disappointment and discouragement. They tell me they've been dealing with some family member; they've been dealing with some students at school; or, they've been dealing with somebody at their work, and the reaction is contempt and indifference and the cold shoulder that they get for what they're giving to these people. What are they giving? They're giving these people a chance to escape the lake of fire, and yet they reject that opportunity. It is very tempting for a Christian to be turned off when cold water is thrown upon him, such that he just quits talking about the Lord. And, of course, there are some believers that just never would talk about the Lord. I don't care what situation they're in, they would never be discussing Jesus Christ. There are some believers that if they were the only people in the world, nobody would ever hear the gospel. So, they never get discouraged. They never have the blues. But for those of you who are willing to open your mouths, and who have a sense of obligation to announce what the Lord has done for the soul that's headed for hell, you're going to get the blues sometimes because your divine viewpoint truth is so rejected.

However, you and I have to put our eyes on the Lord. We cannot be intimidated by the fact that we are in a minority position. So, we do not get discouraged by active attacks or by the cold treatment of being ignored. That's another way the devil works. Outright attack is not quite as hard to deal with as when people just coldly ignore you. That is a time when a Christian tends to be unstable. The Lord Jesus is the example. He patiently endured that kind of abuse at the hands of sinners, and the reason He did it was to give them time to repent. That's a very important point for us to remember: even when Jesus Christ was personally blasphemed, He didn't strike people down dead. He could have done it. Instead, He took it because He was patiently waiting to give them a chance. There's plenty of time for judgment; there's plenty of time for the wrath of God; and, there's plenty of time for punishment.

I was listening recently to an interview on an evening news program. The lady that was being interviewed was one of the correspondents for The Washington Post. The Washington Post is, of course, a cold-blooded, liberal, secular humanist newspaper in just about any viewpoint it has. You can count on it being contrary to the Word of God, and anti-biblical, and fouled up to all of the basic concepts of human relationships. This lady was on there as a feminist. What she was talking about (the thing that was in the news) was the lady who had been jilted by the doctor, so she decided to deal with it by shooting and killing the doctor. They were discussing about whether this lady should have to be punished for the fact that she was jilted and was so upset that she just killed this man. They went back and forth, and it was almost hard to believe that you're living in 20th century Christian-oriented America to be discussing as to whether somebody deserves punishment for walking up and overriding somebody else's volition by taking that person's life.

She said that the thing that upset her was that this has been a blow to the feminist movement, because here is this woman, and she was sort of a leader in our group, and she demonstrated she couldn't live without a man. If there's anything the feminist people want to demonstrate, it's that they can live without men. The funny thing is that they want to be so much like men. If they can't have a man to live with, then they try to be like one. But this woman really demonstrated the quality of her own debasement as a woman, because the interviewer posed the question to her that was a little bit difficult for her to answer. She thought a moment. Then after he gave her the question, the first thing she said was, "Oh, Jesus." This was national television. Here's Ted Koppel interviewing; here's big ABC; and, here's this woman. You already felt the jadedness and harshness coming through. It was so typical of the strong-arm feminist type. She was thinking, and she just was natural.

Now, what should the Lord Jesus Christ, whose name she had blasphemed in such a foul way, have done? He should have struck her dead, but He didn't. Why? Because the old rule in the Ten Commandments about blaspheming by using the name of God in curse words of any kind has now been disbanded? Is it no longer in effect? Has it been repealed? The fact that you can now use "hells" and "damns", which call upon the orientation of the power base of Satan, and that God says that's alright? You know that that's covered by the commandment against taking the Lord's name in vain. It is calling upon an evil power base.

So, who is she kidding? She's kidding herself if she thinks that she can speak the name of Jesus in that way and ultimately get away with it. The time is coming when judgment is going to come. But why not now? Because of the patient enduring of Jesus Christ. That's exactly what the Lord is talking about here. These Philadelphia saints had caught the picture of being able to follow in the patient enduring capacity that even the Son of God had when He, as God, was being humiliated and blasphemed. The Lord Jesus Christ will not tolerate man's abuse forever. When the time comes, when His patient enduring his come to an end (and there will be a time when it comes to an end), then there literally will be all hell to pay. You can count on it.

Part of the Lord's patient enduring that He is referring to here is in connection with His return to rule the earth. If there's anything that's made fun of today, it's the idea that Jesus Christ is ever going to come back from heaven to rule this earth. Right now, Revelation 3:21 tells us that He shares His Father's throne. He is not on His own throne which is the throne that comes to Him in the royal line of King David, and which He will occupy as He rules this world during the millennium. He shares His Father's throne. He's up there waiting until the Father turns to Him and tells Him that the time has come for Him to return. 2 Peter 3:4-9 tell us how the world speaks with contempt about the idea of Jesus Christ returning. They point to the fact that the world has gone on, and century after century has gone by, and nothing has changed. And Peter points out that it's only because Jesus Christ is a patient enduring God who is waiting to give you a chance to escape the consequences of being out of Christ – the consequences of your evil.

So, the believers await the return of the Lord with full expectation that He will return, and that He will vindicate their testimony. 2 Thessalonians 3:5 speaks about our joy someday in that great anticipation: "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ. That's what we're doing. We're patiently waiting for Christ.

So, the Philadelphia believers, while patiently waiting for Christ, expecting His return, endure the world's contempt; the world's indifference; and, the world's rejection rather than retreating from service. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the classic example of patient endurance.

In Hebrews 12:3, we find it put this way: "And consider Him (that is, Jesus Christ) that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be weary and faint in your minds." So, that's the example. One of the things that the Lord is commending these Philadelphia saints for is that they had caught the spirit of the patient endurance of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Word of God as it slowly is grinding away to its ultimate goals.

The idea is, "Because you have functioned, and kept My teaching relative to patient endurance, I also." And here again, the Lord stresses the word "I." Actually, the Greek looks like: "kago," which is combining the word "and" and the word "I" ("ego"). The word is "kaiego." Those are combined. He is stressing the fact that "I also am going to do something for you." The "I" is there to stress the personal dealing of Jesus Christ. We have the word "tereo" which means "to guard:" "I also will keep you. I'm going to guard you." The idea here is "to preserve" from something. This is in the future when the tribulation period arrives, as we'll see in a moment. It's Jesus Christ who does the guarding. And it's a statement of fact.

Then again, the Greek language puts in the word "su" which is "you," stressing, particularly, that "I" (which He didn't have to include in terms of the grammar) and "you" are specifically identified as the ones that He's concerned for. He's going to keep us (for we're going to share this with the Philadelphia saints) "ek" something. "Ek" means this: Here is a circle. It needs to be preserved from within something. You never have to get into it. It isn't just that you're going to be preserved through this thing as you go in and out of it. It means you're going to be preserved from ever having to enter that thing. And that is called here an "hour." The Greek word is "hora." This is a noun. It denotes a period of time. The word "hora" is used in a variety of ways. It's used in the Bible sometimes for part of a day, as in Matthew 8:13. It's sometimes used for a period more or less extended, as in 1 John 2:18. Sometimes it's used for a definite period of time, as in Matthew 26:45. Here it is used for an extended period of time.

This is an extended period of time, which he calls the "peirasmos." This is a noun, and what it means is "trial" or "tribulation." This word "peirasmos" is used in Luke 8:13. When we compare that to Matthew's account and Mark's account of that same incident about the sower and the seed, Matthew 13:21 and Mark 4:17 use Greek words which mean "tribulation" and "persecution." So, tribulation and persecution and "peirasmos" are all talking about the same thing. They all deal with the same stage of the sowing of the seed, where it falls on stony ground. The writers Matthew and Mark use the Greek words that convey the thought of tribulation and persecution. Luke uses the word "peirasmos," and the indication there is very clear that what he is referring to is a time of great suffering. It is a time when people are under great pressures of one kind and another.

**The Tribulation**

We're going to see in a moment that this covers the whole earth. When we think about the prophetic situation, when the whole earth is going to face a time of great divine punishment, it comes out to the tribulation period in Daniel 9:27. That tells us about a period of time after the church is caught up to meet the Lord in the air when there will be seven years on this earth when there will be no church present. At the end of that seven years, Jesus Christ returns from heaven with the church. So, you have Jesus Christ and the church coming down. This period is called the tribulation period. The church is removed before the tribulation period. This period is described in detail in Matthew 24-25. That is talking about this segment of time of the tribulation. You and I are approaching the point of the rapture. The greater details are in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2.

What we have here is a promise to the Philadelphia believers that they're going to be preserved from this time of terrific punishment that God is going to pour out upon the human beings that are on planet earth. And they shall be preserved from the time of tribulation. He clarifies that to confirm that this is the time He's talking about, because He identifies it as "The one which shall come upon all the world." The expression which shall come is made up of two words. One of them is "mello." That means "about to." It's present tense, indicating a continuous coming. It's active. The event itself is near. It's a participle – a statement. And then the normal word for coming: "erchomai" – "about to come" is the idea. This is the word for the act of coming. It's present tense – continuous coming. It's active in meaning. It's the event that is at hand. But it's infinitive, indicating divine purpose.

So, we would translate this: "Which is about to come." So, the Lord says, "Because you have kept the word of My patience (my teaching about hanging in there, though you have little influence in your society in being a clean cut testimony for Me), I also am now going to do something for you. I'm going to keep you (that is, guard you) from the extended period of time (the hour of the tribulation period) which is about to come upon all the world." The reason He says "is about to come" is because once the rapture takes place, then the tribulation begins, and there is nothing that has to be fulfilled prophetically before the rapture takes place. The rapture is the next event of prophecy. Tonight, before you wake up in the morning, or immediately in the week before us, it is at hand. So, 2,000 years ago, He could say it is about to happen, because that is true. In God's reckoning, time has a totally different frame of reference than it does for us. Thousands of years are nothing but a few days with God.

But He's talking about a specific time of tribulation (of a divine judgment) which is to "come upon." That's the Greek word "epi:" "to come upon all." The Greek word for "all" is "holos," which means "entire" or "complete." The word "epi" indicates location. The word "holos" indicates "the whole entire," and what He calls "the world" is actually in the Greek "oikoumena." "Oikoumena" is a noun, and it means "the inhabited earth." It refers to all the places on the planet earth where people are living at the time of the tribulation.

So, what we're talking about is that the whole globe (the whole entire, round planet earth) is going to be struck by judgment from above from God. And it is going to be the worst time in all of human history because, it says that this is a time when God is directing, particularly, "to try them that dwell upon the earth." The word "try" is the Greek word "peirazo." "Peirazo" means "to test in order to make a proof of something." The idea is to reveal the quality of the people who are living in the tribulation. This testing is an expression of divine wrath because of the evil of those people.

Who are those people? They're described by this Greek word which we're going to be running into later in Revelation several times: "katoikeo." "Katoikeo" means "them that dwell:" that is, it means "to inhabit" or "to dwell in." It's constant – present tense. It's their personal status. Its participle – a principle. These are people who are inhabiting certain parts of planet earth. Again, we have the word "epi" (location) upon the earth. The word for "earth" is "ge." That means planet earth. These words are actually technical words. We will run into these several times: "them that dwell upon the earth." That is a technical term for unbelievers. It refers to earth dwellers all around the earth who are under divine judgment, whether they're Jews or gentiles. And these are words that refer to the followers of antichrist.

Let's look at just a few verses coming ahead in Revelation to show you what kind of people He is putting under the gun at this time. In Revelation 9:20-21, they're described with these words: "And the rest of the men who were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which neither can see, nor hear nor walk. Neither repented they of their murders nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." And "sorceries," as you know, is related to the concept of drug usage, because it is the word from which we get the English word "pharmacy." Revelation 16:9 describes these who dwell upon the earth: "And men were scorched with great heat and blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues. And they repented not to give Him glory." Verse 11: "And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

So, what Revelation 3 is telling the Philadelphia believers, which is what you and I are, is that there is coming a time upon this earth, the Great Tribulation period, when God's wrath is finally going to be poured out upon the earth, and we will escape it. We will be preserved from it. One of the reasons, the Lord says, that He is going to do that for us is because we are willing to hang in there under personal abuse; being treated with contempt; being treated as the garbage of our society; being treated as idiots; being treated as people who simply did not know what was going on; ; people who are simplistic; people who had no intellectual capacity; and, people who did not grasp where history was moving so that they knew how to make decisions for the good of society. The Lord says, "The time is coming. I'm going to take you out of that world. You have hung in there faithfully. You've taken the abuse. You've caught the signal for me how to patiently endure, just as My example to you demonstrated that you should do. You kept working when people didn't appreciate you. You still exercised your gift.

When people were contemptuous, and when somebody came up to you and was snotty to you about something you do for the Lord, what did you do? Cry and feel sorry for yourself? Or did you say, "The wonderful thing about the priesthood of the believer is that you can think anything you want to think about what I do and it's OK with me, because that's your priesthood – to think anything you want to. Just don't get in my way when I'm starting to minister, though. Then I'm going to take you to grips. As long as you stand out there, and you're not in my way when I'm ministering, you can say anything you want, and you can think anything you want, because that's between you and the Lord. I've got a few ideas myself about you, as a matter of fact." You just know how to be relaxed in patient enduring. You know, how to stand under the gun and not be feeling sorry for yourself and wanting to quit.

That's what children do. Did you ever notice your little children when you put two friends together to play? Then when one of them gets mad at the other, what do they do? They want to take their toys and go home. They want to take their dolls and leave: "I don't want to play with you." I've seen them where they pick up their whole train sets, struggling in their arms, and take it home and say, "I'm not going to play with you anymore." That's the pity: when Christians grow up, and they're still taking their toys and running home with them because somebody has abused them in what they're doing for the Lord.

The Lord says, "You hang in there. If you think that's a trial, and if you think that's a burden, I'm going to give you a little picture as to what I'm going to do to the world that has abused you. Do you know what He's going to do to the world that's abused you? It's a long story. I don't know if you have it clear. This word "tribulation" should make the hair stand up on the back of your neck. If it doesn't, then you've forgotten what it's like. So, maybe we better review it.

**A Summary of the Tribulation Period**

What is the tribulation period all about? Exactly what's going to happen there? Exactly why is it going to be so terrible upon these who are dwellers upon the face of the earth? First of all, we have the timetable for this that comes from Daniel. As you know, Daniel went to the Lord and began praying, because Daniel realized, since he was in the Babylonian captivity, that the period that they were to be punished was 70 years. Suddenly, Daniel is doing some arithmetic, and Daniel says, "Hey, the 70 years are almost up. I wonder what God is going to do next." So, Daniel goes to the Lord in prayer to ask Him, "What's going to happen to Israel? Where is our future going? We are about ready to complete the 70 years of our Babylonian captivity punishment."

**490 Years**

The result of that, compressing it very quickly, was that Daniel was told that God was going to deal with the Jewish people for 490 more years. Then His dealings with Israel would be at an end. His dealings with the nation would be climaxed, and the final promise of the Abrahamic covenant would be fulfilled. This is the promise which was encased in what was later called the New Covenant. Israel would be regenerated; Israel would be given a new heart; and, Israel would be given a living human spirit. Daniel, of course, was very interested in when this period was going to begin: "When do I begin counting these 490 years?" The Book of Daniel tells us that the Lord told Daniel that it would begin with the decree which was set out to rebuild Jerusalem under Nehemiah. This was done in the rule of Artaxerxes Longimanus in the year 445 B.C. In 445 B.C., the word went out to Nehemiah to take a group back, and to start rebuilding Jerusalem. Nehemiah 2:5-8 describe the 490-year prediction you can read of in Daniel 9:24.

**483 Years**

As the Lord described to Daniel what was going to happen, He made it clear to Daniel that Jewish history was going to move along right up to the point in time when the Messiah would arrive. Lo and behold, wonders of wonders, into this world was going to come the God-man, the Messiah, who was going to save Israel, and who was going to fulfill the Abrahamic covenant. He indicated that that would be a period of 483 years. 483 years would be fulfilled to the death of the Messiah. At the end of 483 years of Jewish history, the Messiah would be murdered.

If that were true, there was a period of seven years of Jewish history that had been predicted to Daniel which was never fulfilled. Of course, we know, as we look back on history, that that's exactly what happened. The word went out to Nehemiah to take a group back to start rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and the temple. The 490 years began clicking off on God's prophetic clock, and it went right on up to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

**Sir Robert Anderson**

There was a man named Sir Robert Anderson who made a fantastic chronological study of the period of time that's involved here. He has demonstrated that the very week that Jesus Christ was crucified closed off 483 years precisely. This is one of the most fantastic predictions of Scripture. On the day they crucified Christ, this period of 483 years had been completely fulfilled.

What actually happened when the Jews rejected their Messiah Savior was that God stopped dealing with them. The, prophetic clock, so to speak, stopped ticking, and God turned his back upon the Jewish people. That's why we indicated to you in the last session, that the Jews today, as the Jews in the Philadelphia church here, tried to call themselves the synagogue of God, and God said, "I've got nothing in the world to do with you. You're not a synagogue of God. You're a synagogue of Satan. You are not dealing with Me because the only way you can deal with Me is through my Son, Jesus Christ, whom you reject. When you reject Him and His deity, there is no other way for you to approach Me."

**A Mystery**

So, God has ceased dealing with the Jews as a nation during a period of time that the Old Testament never revealed. Daniel was never told what was going to happen when the Messiah was rejected. He was told that the Messiah was going to be cut off, but he was never told what was going to happen after that. As far as he knew, the last seven years would be clicked off just like the previous 483 years. It is this side of the crucifixion that we now know that God had in mind, that upon the rejection of His Son by the people of Israel, that God had a program that is called in Scripture a "mystery." The word "mystery" is used in Scripture: "musterion." That is not a Charlie Chan story or something like that. A mystery means something which is hidden, and which later is revealed. It's a technical word in the Bible, and the Scripture calls the church a mystery because it was never revealed in the Old Testament. There is not one smidgen of discussion concerning the church in the Old Testament. There are several places where you can see that a gap was left very clearly.

**A Gap in Time**

We've seen one of those in a previous session when Jesus came into the temple and began reading out of Isaiah. Remember that we showed you how He stopped dead in the middle of a sentence. It was an awkward place to stop, but He stopped there, and then he rolled up the scroll, and He said, "This day these words have been unfulfilled in your hearing." The reason he stopped where He did is because, had He gone on for the rest of the sentence, the rest of the sentence leaped way ahead into the period of the 1,000-year reign of Christ on the earth, the millennium. He could not say that that had been fulfilled. He had to stop right there at the point that was leading right up to his death. It was very precise in the fact that the way He referred to that showed us that at that point there was a gap. He knew what it was. He understood it. There are several places in the Old Testament where there is a gap that is evident between the end of this 483 years and the seven years.

Well, we've seen that this has been almost 2,000 years since Jesus Christ was crucified. The prophetic Jewish clock has stopped ticking, and the Lord has been calling out from Jew and gentile a special group of people which are to be His Son's bride for all eternity, united to Jesus Christ in a personal intimacy that no other group of saints has ever experienced. You are the royal family of God. You are the special chosen ones relative to the person of Jesus Christ. No Jew of the Old Testament will ever enjoy the relationship to Jesus Christ that you will enjoy. None of them will have the access to Him that you and I will.

Therefore, the final seven years, of the timetable given to Daniel has never been fulfilled. This is the period that the Bible calls the tribulation. This is a period that Revelation 3:10 is referring to when it says that the church (we believers) will be preserved from that time here upon this earth. This period is yet ahead. It is going to be fulfilled once the rapture takes place. When the church has been taken out, the prophetic clock again begins ticking, and things begin now to be fulfilled in these last seven years.

**The Book of the Revelation**

That's what the book of Revelation is mostly about. Once you hit Revelation 6, it's all right in here. It's all the activity of the tribulation period and the nightmarish things that are going to take place in that period. The Bible, of course, uses the word "tribulation" in a non-technical way for a period of trial. But as we've seen, it also uses it in a very technical way that has reference to this tribulation period. In John 16:33, it is used in a non-technical way. In Matthew 24:21 it is used in a technical way.

**The Second Coming**

The tribulation goes then from the rapture of the church to the Second Coming of Christ. The thing that ends the tribulation is Jesus Christ returning from heaven with the church.

**The Two Parts of the Tribulation Period**

This period is divided in two. Each part is three-and-a-half years. Certain things take place in the first part, and certain things take place in the last part. It's all a very terrible time. The last half, however, is worse. Matthew 24:15 calls the last part "the great tribulation." The first part is referred to in Daniel 9:27 and Revelation 11:3. It's talking about the first half of the tribulation period. But the great tribulation is the last part. This period, as a whole, is a time when God's wrath is expressed against mankind. It's called "the time of Jacob's trouble," because it's a time of great persecution for the Jews in Jeremiah 20:7. It's referred to as "the time of the indignation" in Isaiah 26:20. It's a time called "a time of trouble" in Daniel 12:1. It's a worldwide event, and it is a time of terror for all those who dwell on the face of the earth. It's a bad time to be alive. It's a good time to be off of this planet, which is what's going to happen to the believers.

**The Day of the Lord**

There are several descriptions of this period in Scripture. In Zephaniah 1:12-18, the prophet refers to something that he calls "the day of the Lord." The day of the Lord is this period of time from the beginning of the tribulation to the end of the millennium. That's why, when the prophets speak about the day of the Lord, they speak about a time of great judgment, and they speak about a time of great blessing, because it's talking about the whole period together. In Matthew 24:4-31, you have the first half of the tribulation in verses 4-14; you have the middle of the tribulation marked in verses 15-19; and, you have the second half of the tribulation in verses 21-31. Of course, there are many references to this era in Revelation. As we say, the church is removed from all of these events.

**The Order of Events**

The order of events is interesting about the tribulation. What's going to happen? How are things going to go? Well, let me just introduce you now, because we won't be able to go through these in detail in this session. But we are going to look at plague after plague, and judgment after judgment, in systematic order so that you have a fresh, updated idea of what is going to take place in the tribulation period, because some of these things cannot happen overnight. Some of the conditions that exist must start at the end of the church age. That's what's fascinating about what is taking place in the world today.

**The First Half of the Tribulation Period**

During this first three-and-a-half years, we have the man who rules the Western Empire. The Western Empire is made up of ten nations who once made up part of the old Roman Empire, such as the European Economic Community that already exists and which now has a parliament. It now has a monetary unit, and it is now seeking to create a political unity as well as the economic unity it has. It is very fascinating that on January 1 of this year, Greece, nation number ten, fell into place. At the headquarters in Brussels, there are ten flagpoles out in front, flying the ten flags of the ten nations that make up this union. Over these nations is going to rise a strong man. He is going to knock out three nations. These three nations will yield their sovereignty to him. The result will be that the other seven will decide to join them. Because he will be the dictator of Western power, he will act in behalf of Israel. He will sign an agreement with Israel and say, "I'm going to be your protector. You can put your mind at ease. There isn't anybody who is going to push you around as long as I'm here and as long as the Western European Common Market group is in existence."

**The European Economic Community**

You must appreciate that the European Economic Community is tremendously powerful financially. It is the greatest economic power in the world today. It has tremendous power financially, and consequently, it has tremendous force. It is a community that is just not just a group of mangy flea-bitten Arabs out in the desert who are getting together with their Cadillacs to have a conference about something that doesn't amount to anything. These people really have something, and they are a force in this world to contend with.

**A Mystery**

Israel, for the first time, is going to feel secure from the communists and the Arab world. That's Israel's problem. That's what this man says. He says, "I'm going to protect you from the communists, and I'm going to protect you from the Arabs. Both of those will not dare to cross me. Both of those will be held in check by me." So Israel is going to feel terrifically secure. She will then go full-fledged ahead to build that famous tribulation temple in order to restore all of the ancient sacrifices and all of the ancient ceremonies. Israel is now building what is called the Great Synagogue to be finished very soon. It may be that that is what is going to be converted into the Jewish temple. But in any case, the status will be Cold War as the tribulation begins.

It's going to take a little time to get ten nations together, isn't it? It has been happening. You can't jump into the tribulation and have all this happen. The sense of Israel to need somebody to protect her is very clear now. The only source she has of that protection today is the United States, and the United States, more and more, is having to ask itself whether its interests are best served by always standing up for Israel, and opposing the Arabs who now have a stranglehold upon our economic lifeline because of the oil situation. So, the United States is no longer a trustworthy ally that Israel can absolutely count on. Now, with the present administration, which is moving in the direction of economic restoration of this nation, we cannot continue this practice of handing out billions of dollars to foreign countries for various reasons that we think are going to help us to secure the world.

The truth of the matter is that we've done very, very poorly. We've had NATO, and we've had SEATO, and we've had all kinds of alliances. We've given billions and billions of dollars in economic aid. We've had the Vietnam War. We've had the Korean War. We've done exactly zilch in preserving the world from communism. It has only gotten stronger. It has only gotten more powerful. So, the United States may, in time, be forced to say, "It's a matter of our personal survival, and we're going to stop at the water's edge. Whatever happens to the rest of the world, we're going to say, "We survived, and we're going to see that we survive under the worst conditions."

**Seal Number One**

In any case, that's the picture, and everything is coming up in clover. The antichrist is in position. He's in place. Israel finally breathes a sigh of relief and feels that peace has come, and then suddenly, Jesus Christ in heaven reaches and breaks open what is called seal number one. Then the tribulation period begins and all hell breaks loose on this earth. As we go through these seals and trumpets and bowls of wrath, you will increasingly give a sigh of relief that you will not be here to be a part of this. I won't say that you won't see it. I can't say for sure that you will see it. I hope they have some seats up there for us to watch all this. It's going to be very fascinating, but I have sent a reservation ahead for myself and all of you in a very good section on cloud nine, which all of you are acquainted with. We should have a pretty good show when all this begins, because it is going to be rough. Praise God that we're not going to be part of it.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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