

Twelve Differences Between the Tribulation and Great Tribulation

No wonder there is so much confusion among Christians regarding the timing of the rapture. We have been so focused on getting out of here before the trouble starts that we have completely missed an important key to understanding the end times. After decades of debate, almost no one seems to realize there are two distinct periods ahead, not just one. According to Jesus, the tribulation period is followed by the great tribulation.

Jesus identified the things that would happen during the tribulation (Matthew 24:4-20) separately from the things that would happen during the great tribulation (Matthew 24:21-31). The two periods are completely different. He made a clear distinction between them by saying things like "immediately after the tribulation of those days" (Matthew 24:29) and "then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will" (Matthew 24:21). If we want to understand the events coming in the future we must pay closer attention to what Jesus said.

Here are twelve differences between the tribulation and the great tribulation:

1. Two Riders on White Horses

The tribulation period begins when the first seal (Revelation 6:1-2) is broken, releasing a rider on a white horse, but it is a false messiah, the antichrist. The great tribulation begins when the sixth seal is broken, releasing a great shaking in the heavens, which sets the stage for the entrance of another rider on a white horse, but He who sat on it is called faithful and true. His name is called the Word of God, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords (Matthew 24:29-31, Revelation 6:12-17 and 19:11-16).

2. Two Different Promises from God

God has promised to deliver His people from the wrath of God that will be poured out during the great tribulation (1 Thessalonians 1:10 and Revelation 3:10), but the wrath of God is not poured out during the tribulation. All of the trouble during that period comes from the spirit of the antichrist after the rider on the white horse receives a crown and goes forth conquering, seeking to grab more power for himself (Revelation 6:1-2) and ultimately leading the world into war (Revelation 6:3-4) and persecution of Christians (Revelation 6:9-11). God has not promised to deliver His people from the wrath of the antichrist. In fact, he promised His people would be persecuted, hated, and killed (Mark 13:13, Matthew 24:9-10, and 2 Timothy 3:12). The antichrist continues causing trouble during the great tribulation, but far worse trouble comes from the wrath of God when the rider on the white horse uses a sharp sword to strike down the nations and treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty (Revelation 8-11 and 19:15). God's people will be rescued from that by the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

3. Two Different Kinds of Trouble

During the tribulation trouble comes like birth pangs, with progressively greater pains separated by progressively smaller intervals of time (Matthew 24:8). Like birth pangs the trouble will subside during these intervals, giving the world hope their pain is over.

During the great tribulation the trouble never stops, causing the world to blaspheme the name of God because of their pains and their sores. They gnaw their tongues because of pain (Revelation 16:8-9).

4. Two Different Vessels Proclaim the Good News

During the tribulation, the primary vessel for proclaiming the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ is the same as it has been for the past two thousand years, the church, the worldwide body of believers. However, even after believers are rescued out of the earth and taken to heaven in the rapture, God will remain faithful until the end by providing another vessel to proclaim the good news to the lost. That is the mission of the 144,000 bond-servants of God who will be sealed with the seal of God on their foreheads (Revelation 7:2-8). 12,000 come from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. These bond-servants have kept themselves sexually pure. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes and no lie is found in their mouths. They are blameless before God (Revelation 14:4). The seal of God protects them from the wrath of God so they are not harmed. The only ones harmed will be those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (Revelation 8:4). In addition to the 144,000 an angel will preach the eternal gospel to those who live on the earth and to every nation and tribe and tongue (Revelation 14:6-7).

5. Two Different Locations for God's People

During the tribulation believers are still on the earth enduring wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, persecution, and multitudes are murdered (Matthew 24:9, Revelation 6:1-11), but during the great tribulation believers are rescued out of the earth and taken to heaven (Daniel 12:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18, Revelation 3:10, Revelation 7:9-17).

6. Two Different Durations

The tribulation period lasts much longer than the great tribulation period because the tribulation includes the rise of the antichrist (Revelation 6:1-2) plus his three and a half year reign (Daniel 7:21-25). The tribulation period begins when the antichrist receives his first crown then goes forth conquering to grab more power on his way to becoming ruler of the world. The Bible does not tell us the number of years between the time he receives his first crown and the time he begins his reign as ruler of the world, but this transition must occur before the final seven-year period begins. Terry Bennett claims the angel Gabriel visited him and showed him the rise of the antichrist will be completed during a 21-year period from 2008-2028. The angel told him by the end of that period, by 2028, "[You will see 666.](#)" If that is true then the tribulation period would include the 21-year rise of the antichrist plus at least another three and a half years in which the antichrist rules the world (Daniel 7:21-25). Those three and a half years would be during the first half of the final seven-year period. The final seven-year period begins when the antichrist makes a covenant with the many (Daniel 9:27). The great tribulation is completed during the second half of the final seven-year period, during the final three and a half years. So the tribulation period is much longer than the great tribulation.

7. Two Different Identities for the Antichrist

The true identity of the antichrist is hidden during the tribulation, but revealed during the great tribulation. During the tribulation the world is blinded from seeing the true identity of the antichrist, but at the end of the tribulation his identity is revealed during the abomination of desolation (2 Thessalonians 2:3), which marks the beginning of the great tribulation (Matthew 24:21). Had they known his true identity they never would have followed him, but by then it will be too late for them. All who worshiped the beast and took his mark will drink of the wine of the wrath of God (Revelation 14:9-10).

8. The World Worships the Beast, but Mourns and Hides from the Lord

In the tribulation all who dwell on the earth will worship the beast, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain (Revelation 13:8). They will willingly follow this false messiah to their destruction. In the great tribulation all the tribes of the earth will mourn when they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30) because they know they are doomed. They will hide themselves in caves and among the rocks of the mountains and will say to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Revelation 6:15-16)

9. The Antichrist Increases Then Decreases

During the tribulation the antichrist continually increases in power. He prospers in whatever he does and performs his will with no one to stop him (Daniel 8:12). He rises from ruler of one nation to ruler of the world (Revelation 6:1-2, Revelation 13:16-17). During the great tribulation the antichrist continually decreases in power. He will be broken without a hand laid on him (Daniel 8:25). Complete destruction will be poured out on him (Daniel 9:27).

10. The Antichrist Destroys Then Gets Destroyed

During the tribulation the antichrist will destroy mighty men and holy people. He will destroy many while they are at ease (Daniel 8:24-25). During the great tribulation the antichrist goes to destruction (Revelation 17:11). The Lord will destroy him along with all those who destroy the earth (Revelation 11:18).

11. God's People Are Worn Down Then Given Dominion

During the tribulation the antichrist will wear down the saints of the Highest One. They will be given into his hand for three and a half years (Daniel 7:25). But during the great tribulation his dominion will be taken away, annihilated, and destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him (Daniel 7:26-27).

12. Two Different Endings for the Antichrist

After 42 months of speaking arrogant words and blasphemies against God, and being worshiped by the whole world (Revelation 13:5), the antichrist is still not satisfied. He wants to be God. So in the middle of the final seven-year period he violates his own seven-year covenant by ordering an end to all sacrifices and offerings in the temple in Jerusalem (Daniel 9:27). He then enters the temple and takes his seat in the holy place, displaying himself as being God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). Adding to his long list of abominable acts, this extreme act takes him right to the edge and over the edge. Daniel described it saying "on the wing (the extremity, the edge) of abominations will come one who makes desolate" (Daniel 9:27). The antichrist brings devastation and destruction upon himself and everything around him because of his offensive acts against God. He is the abomination that brings desolation. Jesus warned that when we see him standing in the holy place then the tribulation ends and the great tribulation begins (Matthew 24:15-21). So the tribulation ends with the antichrist exalting himself in the highest, but the great tribulation ends with him being thrown down to the lowest place. He is thrown alive into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, and the false prophet with him (Revelation 19:20). The burning fire will destroy his body and put him to death (Daniel 7:11).

To learn more about the rise of the antichrist, read my previous post, "[Terry Bennett: You Will See 666](#)".

To learn more about the timing of the rapture, read my post, "[Ten Things that Must Happen Before the Rapture](#)".

To find out how to know you are going to heaven when you die, read my post, "[How to Know You Are Going to Heaven](#)".