

Doctrine



*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path...
The entrance of Your words gives light;
it gives understanding to the simple. Psalm 119:105,130*

Eschatology

The Tribulation and the Church

THEOLOGY

Calvary Old Path Believes there is a literal heaven and a literal hell.

Matthew 25:46, Luke 12:5

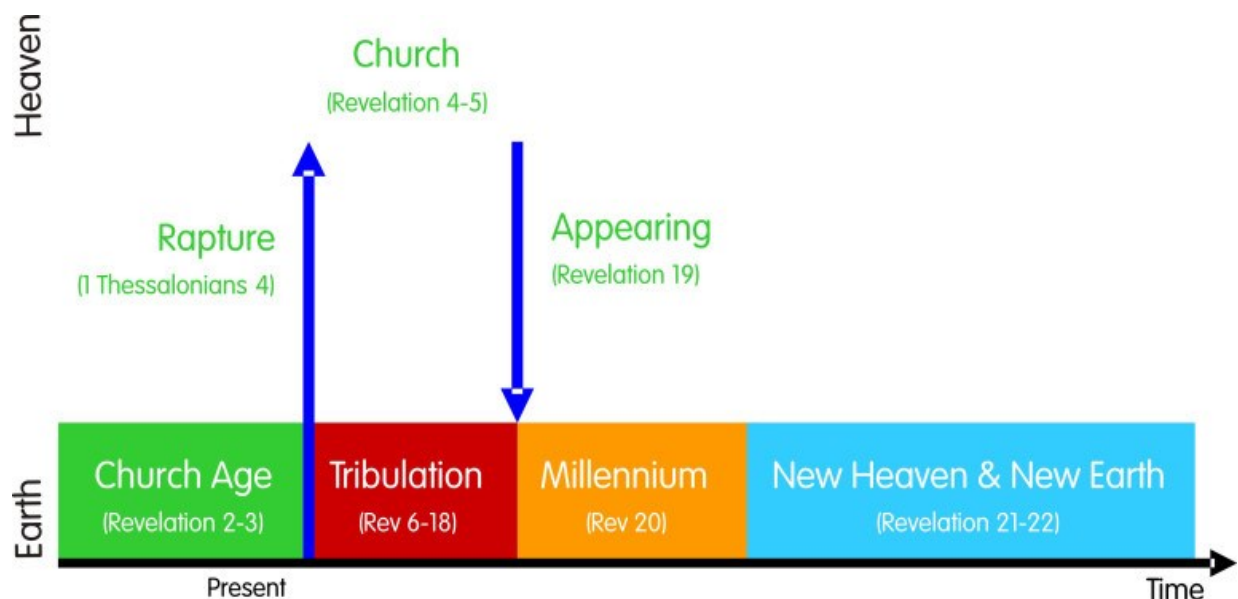
DOCTRINE

Accordingly, our doctrinal view is that before the final judgement of all mankind takes place God will judge the earth and those present on it, at that time. Furthermore we believe the church will be removed before the events known as the Tribulation in what is commonly known as the Rapture.

What we will cover on this topic:

1. Tribulation, What Does the Term Mean?
2. What is the Tribulation Which Comes Upon the Whole Earth?
3. Reasons for the Tribulation (Two Halves).
4. The Controversies Within End Times Beliefs.
5. What About the Mark of the Beast?

The Bible teaches there will be a time of **Tribulation, (God's Judgment)** on earth, future to our time (*I John 2:18-22, Matthew 24:21*). It will persist for a period of seven years during which human depravity will reach excess, with God judging accordingly (*Daniel 9:25-27*).



There is a debate in theological circles as to whether or not the Church will be here when God's wrath is unleashed upon the earth. At Calvary Old Path, we believe in the blessed hope that Christ will come for His Church **before** God's judgments are loosed. We will address this in the closing section.

Luke 21:36 tells us, "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

We will be taking excerpts from Pastor Chuck Smith's book, "*The Tribulation and the Church*" written in blue.

It is important to make a clear distinction about "tribulation" found in the Bible. There are two types of tribulation. (1.) The **Tribulation** referred to by Jesus and Daniel and detailed by John in the Revelation. (2) The **tribulation** that Jesus promised would come to the Church.

Speaking to His disciples in *John 16:33* Jesus said, "*These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*" The Church will have tribulation in the world. The tribulation that is faced by the Church originates from the world and comes from the world system controlled by Satan. Satan is behind all the attacks on the Church.

Paul tells us in *Ephesians 6:12-14*, "*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all, to stand.*"

Here we see clearly that the source of our tribulation is definitely the world system governed by Satan. However, if we put on our full armor of God daily, we are protected. The tribulation experienced by the child of God comes from the Satan-governed world. The Tribulation that is coming on the sinful world will come from God. This leader is also known as the Antichrist (*1 John 2:18*), the man of sin, and the son of perdition (*2 Thessalonians 2:3*) in the New Testament.

What is the Tribulation Which Comes Upon the Whole Earth?

The tribulation refers to a time wherein judgment is poured out on the earth. It is broken into two halves. The first 3 ^{1/2} years of the tribulation begins with a series of judgments. We read about these beginning at Revelation chapter 6. This will be a terrible time, unlike any in history and a quarter of the earth's population will perish during this time. (*Revelation 6:8*). Jesus does, however, describe a series of events known as the Great Tribulation, which describes the latter 3^{1/2} years.

There is mention of an event known as the Abomination of Desolation found in *Daniel 12:11* and mentioned by Jesus in *Matthew 24:15*. In Daniel's passage it tells us the remaining judgment days. This is one of the passages helping us to know it is 3 ^{1/2} years. The book of **Revelation** also gives detail on the same event.

He will exalt himself as God. This person will rise to power claiming to speak for God, and then claim to be God, himself. This will be a time of Satan's greatest deception. Satan will enable the antichrist to perform miracles (*Revelation 13:13*). Because of these miracles, many will be deceived.

Reasons for the Tribulation

1. The scripture says that its purpose is threefold...
2. To try men who dwell upon the earth (*Revelation 3:10*)
3. That God might vent His wrath upon the wicked (*Revelation 15:7*)
4. To destroy those who destroyed the earth. Those who fall in one or all of these categories will be on the earth to experience the Tribulation period. (*Revelation 11:18*)

In the Bible, we read how God repeatedly spoke to people explaining when and why He judged people. He is a God of love, but He is also a God of justice, and He is the same now as He has always been.

We further see in scripture that God is consistent in letting people know they can be spared His Wrath. Examples are found throughout scripture so we can know what He expects and walk by faith. Therefore even if judgment comes, we know it is not reserved for His people (*1 Thessalonians 5:9*).

God has always shown in the Bible that He does NOT judge the righteous with the wicked. We are told in *1 Thessalonians 5* that God has not appointed us unto wrath. Also, in *Romans 5:9* we are told that “being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”

The people who argue that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation and experience the wrath of God must somehow explain the following point. When did God change His ways as to now punish the righteous with the wicked? That would be a change in God’s character to force His children to face His wrath. Remember, *God said that he changes not! (Malachi 3:6)*.

The prophet Daniel explains some of the historical events which lead us to our understanding of this series of seven years. We read about these events in what is often referred to as the 70 weeks of Daniel: The prophecy of the 70 weeks began when the decree went forth to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. The angel Gabriel told Daniel that 483 years after that decree, the Messiah would come forth. Exactly 483 years later, Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem and presented Himself as Messiah to His people. According to Daniel, God’s program for Israel will encompass a total of 490 years. 483 are past, leaving seven years to yet be fulfilled. Daniel’s prophecy foretells a period of 69 weeks that will begin on a certain day and end on a certain day. Then there will be a gap in time, and finally there will be the Seventieth Week. It is to be understood that 69 weeks in Daniel refer to groups of years and that a “week” refers to a group of seven years, so the total is 483 years (69x7).

Reason For the Gap

After the 69th week there is a great gap. Where does that gap come from? In *Daniel 9:24* we see that 70 weeks, or 490 years, are determined in order for six things to happen:

- 1) To finish the transgression.
- 2) To make an end of sins.
- 3) To make reconciliation for iniquity.
- 4) To bring in everlasting righteousness.
- 5) To seal up vision and prophecy.
- 6) To anoint the Most Holy.

Not one of these prophecies was fulfilled in the first 69 weeks, so there *must* be a future time for God’s people. At that time, the final seven-year Tribulation period will begin.

As was mentioned previously, an event takes place which Jesus calls the Abomination of Desolation. This event triggers the Great Tribulation. We will explore this and discuss if there is any reason for the church to be here on earth during this time.

Daniel 9:27 tells us:

He will confirm a covenant with many for one week (which is seven years). In the middle of the week (3 ½ years in) he will end sacrifice and offering. On a wing of the temple, he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him. This last 3½ years is known as the “time of Jacob’s trouble” which is described in *Matthew 24:15-21* by the Lord Jesus. This time period is the Great Tribulation which will be the most awful time imaginable. Since Jesus referred to this final seven year period as yet future in His day, and the Anti-Christ hasn’t yet made the covenant with Israel, we must conclude that it’s still in the future.

The fact that the Antichrist makes the covenant for seven years indicates that it’s signed the beginning of the final seven year period.

All of these events will culminate in the physical return of Jesus to the earth. This puts an end to the 7 years of Tribulation on earth and begins the Millennial Reign of Jesus upon the earth. These two subjects are covered in our 2 booklets called ***The Second Coming of Christ and Our Final Destination***. These doctrinal views are not without disagreement.

The Controversies Within End Times Beliefs

Here are a few examples:

Is the church included in these judgments? Some teach that the church will endure some or all of the Tribulation years. We do not hold those views for several reasons. First, we do not believe the church is appointed to wrath, as in the global wrath described in Revelation. We believe that was Paul’s point when he described the events in *1 Thessalonians 5:9*.

We take the view that the judgments are for those who “dwell upon the earth” (*Revelation 3:10, 6:10*), as in those who do not believe in the atoning work of Jesus Christ for the sin of mankind.

What about Israel? We believe this time of unprecedented judgment is a time when unbelieving Israel will be turned to their Savior. The focus of Revelation deals primarily with events happening in Israel, and Jerusalem in particular.

When Jesus returns to the earth at the close of the Tribulation, which is also known as the Second Coming (*Revelation 19:11*), the Lord will reconcile His chosen people, Israel, to Himself. Many Jewish people will believe in Jesus as Messiah at that time (*Zechariah 12:10, Romans 11:26*).

What about the Mark of the Beast?

Revelation 13 makes mention of a mark people will need to receive for daily sustenance (*Revelation 13:16-17*). Much has been made of this mark and much time has been spent trying to figure out what it is, functionally. Though this is interesting, it is unimportant when compared to what is implied regarding why people will be forced to take it or die. It must be known that in taking it, there is an allegiance people will need to swear to “the beast”. In doing so, they will reject God as sovereign and pledge their loyalty to “the beast”. Those who do so are simply deceived (*Revelation 19:20*). None will be allowed to buy or sell without the mark (*Revelation 13:17*). Those who refuse worship of the image of the beast will be killed (*Revelation 13:15*). For those who are still here, to take the mark of the beast is to forfeit one’s ability to be saved (*Revelation 14: 10-11*).

Finally it is asked, ***Why would God send a person to hell for rejecting Jesus?*** Rejection of Jesus, whether before or after the tribulation, is to reject the love of God as witnessed by the Holy Spirit (*John 16:5-11*). It is also important to know God does not “send people to hell” as though that is His desire. Quite the opposite is true. Mankind is already condemned, but Jesus came to save that which is lost.

In His own words He said this in *John 3:17-19*:

“¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ¹⁸ “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

If you have never done so, please consider the claims of Jesus and the matter of eternity.

Resources: [*The Tribulation and The Church by Chuck Smith*](#) (Written in blue)

Scriptures are from NKJV



On the Path Discernment Ministry

Discernment is always mentioned in scripture in a favorable light. Discernment was promoted as a way to avoid error and cause the believer to continually be seeking and watching with vigilance. Accordingly, these materials are provided for you in order to assist you in growing in your knowledge and understanding of God's Word. We have taken great care to give a thorough and expansive explanation of the positions of the church.

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These booklets are provided to explain Old Path's teachings on topics of theology and doctrine. Should you have questions on doctrinal matters or would like further clarity on these positions, you can email us and we will assist you by researching the needed matters. However, we do not provide these booklets with the intention of debating.