

The Great Tribulation Preceding the Day of Jehovah

by Arno Clemens Gaebelein

Arno Clemens Gaebelein preaches about the perfect harmony of prophecy in the Bible, focusing on the events and blessings surrounding the great day of Jehovah. He highlights the characteristics of the times preceding Jehovah's manifestation, emphasizing the troubles, persecutions, and wickedness that will come to a climax. Gaebelein challenges the prevalent belief in a universal judgment day after the world's conversion, asserting that the day of Jehovah will come first, followed by world submission and peace. He delves into various Old Testament prophecies, such as those in Genesis, Psalms, and Isaiah, depicting the sufferings and tribulations of God's earthly people, Israel, before their deliverance by Jehovah.

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Transcript

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characteristics include evil, trouble, persecution, wickedness, and rebellious nations" - heading: "The Times Preceding the Day of Jehovah" points: - "The times are described as days of trouble for God's earthly people, Israel, and for all the inhabitants of the earth" - "The description is found in various Scriptures, including Genesis, Deuteronomy, and the Psalms" - heading: "The Great Tribulation" points: - "The great tribulation is a period of suffering and distress for Israel" - "It is described in various Scriptures, including Hosea, Isaiah, and Daniel" - heading: "The Day of Jehovah" points: - "The day of Jehovah is a time of great trouble and distress for the wicked" - "It is described in various Scriptures, including Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah" - heading: "The Church and the Great Tribulation" points: - "The church has nothing to do with the great tribulation" - "The church is taken away from the earth before the tribulation begins" faq: - q: "What is the great tribulation?" a: "The great tribulation is a period of suffering and distress for Israel, described in various Scriptures as a time of evil, trouble, persecution, and wickedness." - q: "When will the great tribulation occur?" a: "The great tribulation will occur before the day of Jehovah, and is described as a time of great trouble and distress for the wicked." - q: "What will happen to the church during the great tribulation?" a: "The church will be taken away from the earth before the tribulation begins, and will not be affected by it." - q: "What is the purpose of the great tribulation?" a: "The purpose of the great tribulation is to bring about the deliverance of Israel and the establishment of God's kingdom on earth." - q: "How will the great tribulation be shortened?" a: "The great tribulation will be shortened because of the elect, who are a remnant of God's earthly people, and will be saved in the earth so that they may form the nucleus of the kingdom." quotes: - "The prophetic Word in its testimony harmonizes in respect to the characteristics of the times preceding the day of Jehovah." - "The characteristics announced by the prophets are: Evil, trouble, persecution, wickedness come to its climax, rebellious nations arising against God and against His Anointed, as well as upheavals of various kinds." - "The great tribulation is a period of suffering and distress for Israel, described in various Scriptures as a time of evil, trouble, persecution, and wickedness." applicationPoints: keywords: - "Great Tribulation" - "Day of Jehovah" - "Israel" - "Church" - "Prophecy" - "Old Testament" - "New Testament" - "God's Kingdom" - "Deliverance" - "Suffering" - "Distress" ---

After we have seen how fully the prophetic Word harmonizes in the revelation of the great day of Jehovah, we are prepared to follow throughout the Scriptures the events which cluster around that day, as well as the blessings which are promised to follow. As we continue in this we shall see more and more the perfect harmony of prophecy.

We point out first of all the fact that the entire prophetic Word gives us a minute description of the characteristics of the times which precede the manifestation of Jehovah in His day. In this description nearly all the different instruments through whom the Spirit of God spoke fully agree; nor does this description end with the Old Testament. It is continued in the New.

We touch now a most important theme of God's revelation. We are aware of the fact that what we shall learn from the Scriptures is in direct opposition to the beliefs and theories prevalent throughout Christendom. Alas! that so many who call themselves Christian believers should continue in these wrong conceptions and theories, and remain grossly ignorant of God's eternal purposes revealed in His Word. Men have taught and teach without any Scriptural warrant whatever, that a universal judgment day is to come, and that this day will come after the conversion of the world and the extension of the kingdom (as they term it) over the whole world. According to this almost universal belief, things are progressing favourably, improvements set in on all sides, evil is being rapidly checked, and the common lot of humanity improved; nations are purer than ever before, world-wide peace almost at hand, as well as the

conversion of the great heathen nations. All this is an unscriptural dream, something which is completely against the revealed purposes of God. It is true there are many precious promises in the Scriptures which predict world submission, the complete rule of the King of kings over the nations of the earth, as well as peace on earth, but nowhere do we find these blessings predicted to come before the day of Jehovah, but throughout the entire prophetic Word the order is the reverse. First comes that great and terrible day of the Lord, and then world submission, the deliverance of groaning creation, and the nations will learn war no more. May it please our Lord to open the eyes and the hearts of many of His children to see these great fundamental truths.

The prophetic Word in its testimony harmonizes in respect to the characteristics of the times preceding the day of Jehovah. The characteristics announced by the prophets are: Evil, trouble, persecution, wickedness come to its climax, rebellious nations arising against God and against His Anointed, as well as upheavals of various kinds. When at last the Wicked One rules and the greatest darkness prevails, the day of Jehovah breaks in all its majestic grandeur.

The times preceding the day of Jehovah and His manifestation are everywhere described as days of trouble for God's earthly people, Israel, and for all the inhabitants of the earth.

In Gen 15:12 we read:

"And when the sun was going down a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him."

This was done to announce unto Abram that his seed was to pass through a dark night, a horrible experience. The prophetic vision found its first partial fulfilment in Egypt. The end of that period, when the seed of Abraham was away from the land of promise, was the darkest, full of the severest sufferings. The captivity in Babylon was another national night experience for Israel, and now for well-nigh two thousand years the people whom God has not cast away are in a still greater dispersion. It will terminate like the other dispersions. The end will be, as it was in Egypt, by the intervention of God. However, before this will take place the seed of Abraham will pass through a dark night of suffering, called in different scriptures "the great tribulation."

One of the strongest types in the Old Testament foreshadowing Christ, His first and second coming, the salvation He brings for the Gentiles, and finally the blessings for His own who rejected Him, is Joseph. We read there of a famine which came upon the earth, and during that famine the sons of Jacob, who had sold their own brother, came face to face with him whom they had hated without a cause. The famine in the story of Joseph is typical of Israel's suffering yet to come in the great tribulation preceding the day of Jehovah.

We turn again to Moses' prophetic song in the 32d chapter of Deuteronomy.

As elsewhere in prophecy, the Spirit of God announces here the evil results of Israel's apostasy. According to the Song of Moses they were to apostatize.

"Then Jeshurun grew fat and kicked: Thou art waxen fat, Thou art grown thick, And thou art covered with fatness; He gave up God, who made him, And lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." (Deu 32:15.)

The Rock of his salvation is the Lord whom they rejected, and here Moses announces this fact. After these words, we read of their present dispersion. What a description of the calamities to come upon them, and

what a literal fulfilment of all up to the twentieth century!

But we direct our attention mostly to the close of this chapter:

"Vengeance is mine and recompense, For the time when their foot shall slip. For the day of their calamity is at hand, And the things that shall come upon them make haste, For Jehovah shall judge his people, And shall repent in favour of His servants, When He seeth their power is gone, And there is none shut up or left" (Deu 32:35-36.)

Now, here we have a prediction which is still unfulfilled. It describes the condition of the chosen people immediately before Jehovah intervenes in their behalf. A calamity is to come upon them and their power will be gone. Though Israel has passed through many calamities, yet this great trouble, when they shall be completely prostrated, has not yet been reached. More than ever in our day Israel maketh flesh his arm and is departed from the Lord; they trust in almost everything else except in Him who is the Hope of Israel. They are then to be plunged into trouble and sorrow before the Lord arises for their deliverance.

But let us see if we find such prophecies in other Scriptures.

We turn our attention next to the Book of Psalms. These prophetic songs are especially rich in predictions and vivid descriptions of the troubles which come upon a remnant of the sons of Jacob. Many Psalms contain the experiences of the Godfearing part of the Jews passing through the tribulation and being delivered out of the hands of their enemies by the coming of the Lord from Heaven. We read of the dangers and perplexities by which this remnant, brought back to the land of their fathers, is surrounded. Their sufferings are clearly portrayed, and we hear their pleadings for divine mercy, deliverance, and interference. The imprecatory prayers, calling God's wrath down upon the enemies, are then in order, and will be answered by the majestic appearing of the heavenly King.

This is the only satisfactory key to these imprecatory Psalms, which call on God to destroy the enemies. Christians cannot use them, for we are to pray for our enemies. The pious Jews living in that time of trouble will utter these words.

We can confine ourselves to but a few of the many passages in the Psalms which speak of the days preceding the day and manifestation of Jehovah. To quote them all would take many pages.

As previously stated, the Psalms are divided into five books, corresponding to the five books of the Pentateuch. The Exodus part of the Psalms extends from Psalm 42 to 72. As we learn in the book of Exodus of Israel's bondage, suffering, tribulation, and miraculous deliverance, so we read in this second book of Psalms that which will befall Israel in the latter times, and their lot before the day of Jehovah begins, as well as their deliverance by the intervening power of Jehovah.

The reader who is interested in a closer study of the final history of the remnant of Israel should read carefully the Exodus section of the Psalms. Here is the language of the believing remnant in trouble in the last days of this age:

"Judge me, O God, And plead my cause against an ungodly nation; Deliver me from the deceitful and wicked man. For thou art the God of my strength; Why hast thou cast me off? Why go I about mourning, Because of the oppression of the enemy ? " (Psa 43:1-2.)

We take another illustration:

" Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God; Secure me on high from them that rise up against me. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, And save me from men of blood. For behold they lie in wait for my soul; Strong ones are gathered against me; Not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O Jehovah." (Psa 59:1-3.)

It is very interesting and instructive to study these experiences, pleadings, and sufferings of the Jewish remnant in the coming days, the ending of our age, as revealed in the Psalms, and many are the lessons we can learn for ourselves, though we shall not be present on the earth when that day; comes.

The book of Joel, as remarked before, speaks of the enemies of Israel under the type of the locusts. The 2nd chapter contains a wonderful description of what is still unfulfilled. Before the Lord is merciful to His land and His people and restores all things, as well as pours out the Spirit upon all flesh, there will be an invasion of a hostile army into the land. This awful trouble is followed by the repentance of the people and their prayer, which reminds us of the many similar prayers in the Psalms:

" Spare Thy people, O Jehovah, And give not Thy heritage to reproach, That the nations should rule over them, Wherefore should they say among the nations Where is their God?" (Joe 2:17.)

This is at once followed by the coming of the day of Jehovah. He will answer His persecuted and outraged people out of heaven and appear himself for their deliverance.

"Then Jehovah will be jealous for His land, And will pity His people. And Jehovah will answer and say to His people, Behold, I will send you the corn, The new wine and the oil, And ye shall be satisfied therewith: And I will no longer make you A reproach among the nations." (Joe 2:18-19.)

The same revelation we can easily trace in the other prophets.

Hosea, for instance, contains a prophecy which is in fullest harmony with Moses' song and the other prophecies:

" I, I will tear and go away; I will carry off, and there shall be none to deliver. I will go away, I will return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face. In their affliction they will seek me earnestly. Come and let us return unto Jehovah: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us: on the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live before His face" (Hos 5:14,Hos 6:1-3.)

In this passage we have the entire history of Israel in a nutshell. Jehovah had been with them, but on account of their unbelief had left them. However, He does not leave them forever. They are to acknowledge their offence and seek His face. When will it be? In their affliction. The history of the Jews, since they cried, " His blood be upon us and upon our children," has been a history of continued affliction, of blood and tears; yet have they not acknowledged their offence. They have not acknowledged their blood-guiltiness, as David did. (Psa 51:14.) A greater affliction is coming for that nation. The affliction here in Hosea is the great end affliction, the calamity in Moses' song, when their power is gone, and Jehovah will come in His own day, the third day, to raise up His people.

The Spirit of God unfolds the same characteristic of the last days in the vision of Isaiah.

The end of the 10th chapter gives us a description of these events. The Assyrian falls into the land, and wherever he marches there is trouble, bloodshed, and misery. He comes to the very hill of Jerusalem, where he is arrested by the Lord (Isa 10:24-34). The Assyrian of the past is the prophetic type of the

Assyrian of the future, one who invades Israel's land from the north.

In the 24th chapter of Isaiah we have a description of the day of Jehovah, and in the 25th we read the praise of the believing part of Israel in having escaped the terrible upheavals:

"For thou hast been a fortress to the poor, a fortress for the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, for the blast of the terrible ones, as a storm against a wall. Thou hast subdued the tumult of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; as the heat by the shadow of a cloud, so the song of the terrible ones is brought low" (Isa 25:4-5).

Turning to the 59th chapter we read the following prophecy:

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of Jehovah will lift up a banner against him. And the Redeemer will come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith Jehovah" (Isa 59:19-20).

In Romans 11 we find a great New Testament witness concerning the future of the Jewish race. Their national conversion in a future day is maintained in that chapter. The Holy Spirit uses this very passage : " The Deliverer shall come out of Sion; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom 11:26). It is evident then before the Deliverer comes, the enemy comes in like a flood. The enemy rushes in immediately before the Lord comes as Deliverer for His people.

The 60th chapter gives another prophecy of the same nature:

" Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but Jehovah will arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen on thee."

It is clear that when Jehovah is revealed with His glory in His day, not light, but darkness, will cover the earth.

In the prophet Jeremiah we have, almost in the centre of the book, a number of chapters which treat of the future of Israel. The first one is the 30th, and here in the beginning we find the great tribulation for Israel announced as it is to take place in the last days:

" And these are the words that Jehovah hath spoken concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus saith Jehovah: We have heard a voice of trembling, there is fear and no peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a male doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer 30:4-8).

In the prophet Ezekiel the Lord declares: "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him " (Eze 21:27). Here, too, we have a passage which clearly indicates the characteristic of the end of the age. It will be overturning till He comes whose right it is, the Son of Man, in power and glory.

The Book of Daniel contains perhaps the completest prediction of this characteristic of the days preceding the Return of the Lord:

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of distress, such as never was since there was a nation until that time. And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that is found written in the book" (Dan 12:1).

It is obvious that this great distress must fall into the future, for the people of Daniel have not yet seen the deliverance promised in the context, nor has Michael, the great prince, stood up for the people. (Compare with Rev 12:7.) The New Testament throws complete light upon this passage. We shall come to it later.

We quote but a few more passages. Mic 7:1-7, describes the evil day when the godly man is no longer in the land; the day of visitation and their perplexity has come. Habakkuk in his vision saw that day of distress and the enemy coming in like a flood, and thus he expressed himself:

" I heard and my belly trembled; My lips quivered at thy voice; Rottenness entered into my bones, And I trembled in my place, That I might rest in the day of distress, When their invader shall come up against the people (Hab 3:16).

In the last chapter of Zechariah we have a description of the great siege of Jerusalem, which forms the culminating point of that great day of trouble. Just before Jehovah comes to fight against the nations Jerusalem will be in the greatest distress. History has nothing to show in the way of fulfilment of the last chapter of the prophet of Glory.

And if we turn to the New Testament we find that here, too, the same revelation is given.

In His Olivet discourse--by far the greater part of it relating to this future history, the end of this age, all yet to be fulfilled--our Lord spoke the following words:

"Then shall there be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now nor ever shall be; and if those days had not been cut short, no flesh had been saved; but, on account of the elect, those days shall be cut short" (Mat 24:21-22).

Let us remember that the Jewish disciples of our Lord do not represent the church. No church was then in existence. The question of the disciples was concerning the end or completion of the age. As they had absolutely no knowledge of the present "age", the church age, they meant nothing else than the Jewish age. And the Lord gives them an answer accordingly. He refers them to the prophecy of Daniel (verse 15). The description He gives of the sufferings and tribulations of a faithful Jewish remnant, which keeps the Sabbath, harmonizes fully with what we have learned from the Old Testament. The above passage, in which our Lord speaks of the great tribulation, has nothing to do with the church. The elect are a remnant of God's earthly people. The days of that tribulation will be shortened, not to keep them from losing eternal salvation, but to save them in the earth so that they may form the nucleus of the kingdom.

" Immediately after the tribulations of these days the sun shall be darkened . . . they shall see the Son of Man " (verses 29, 30). The great tribulation thus precedes the visible coming of the Son of Man.

In the Epistles, which contain the truths for this present age, which is not Jewish, we look in vain for any passages which speak of the great tribulation. It is true tribulations are mentioned, but nowhere is the believer in Christ warned to look out for the great tribulation. The church has nothing whatever to do with that coming period of distress. She is taken away from the earth immediately before that tribulation begins.

In the Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, our Lord gives from above a continued description of the tribulation and distress at the end of the age. Before these mighty scenes of trouble are pictured, and the riders gallop over the earth to reap their awful harvest, the glorified church is seen in Heaven before Him who sits upon the throne (Rev. 4 and 5). The promise given in the third chapter has been fulfilled: " I will keep thee out of the hour of trial." It would lead us too far to describe all which we read in the chapters which follow the fifth. The aspect of all is intensely Jewish. It connects closely with the Old Testament predictions. Perhaps every scene of trouble and wrath mentioned in Revelation is found somewhere in the prophetic Word.

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