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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Daniel 9:24-27

“The Tribulation Period”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Gracious God and Heavenly Father, we come to Thee again in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee again for the privilege of studying Thy word. We are so grateful to Thee for all of the revelation concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. And now, Lord, tonight we pray as we study that we may understand the things that concern the future. We realize, Lord, that there is much in the future that we probably cannot understand. But thou hast given us a large amount of revelation concerning that which lies ahead of us. And may, Lord, the Holy Spirit enable us to understand the things that we should know regarding the future. We commit this class to Thee tonight and pray that it may honor and glorify Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

[Message] Now, tonight we are beginning the study of "The Tribulation Period." And if you will, take a look at the diagram on the side of the wall to my left. Now remember, last time we finished the church age which concludes with the rapture or catching up of the church.

Now the next period according to our chart is the period of the Great Tribulation. Now the term tribulation is derived from Matthew chapter 24 and verse 21 when Matthew,

as he recounts our Lord's Olivet discourse using or giving our Lord's own words, says regarding this period of time that it is the period of the Great Tribulation. So, that is the biblical support for the term the tribulation, Matthew chapter 24 and verse 21.

Now, you might suspect that something like the Great Tribulation would have very little in the Bible on that specific subject. But surprisingly, a large amount of the Bible is devoted to the events of the Great Tribulation period. Large sections of the Book of Daniel relate to the period of the tribulation. Large sections of the Book of Revelation relate to the period of the tribulation. Our Lord himself in the Olivet discourse discusses largely events surrounding the period of the Great Tribulation, either its beginning or its end or some of the things that transpire in it. Paul in his epistles has a good bit to say about the period of the Great Tribulation and specifically events that occur within it. So this is a big subject, believe it or not, the period of the Great Tribulation. So we cannot cover it in detail.

There is an old country saying, which Charles Howard will understand, although the rest of you city folk might not. "You can't get all the coons up the same tree," which means essentially I think, doesn't it Charles, that you can't have everything that you want all the time.

Well, it would be nice if we could study all of the revelation of the Bible concerning the tribulation but we cannot. So instead of taking a microscopic study of the tribulation, we'll take a telescopic and just survey the period.

Now in the notes, I have given you just a brief survey from the standpoint of Matthew chapter 24 and chapter 25. But since you will have the notes, I'm going to let you have the notes and then take a different approach, so that you will have the benefit of what like the notes may have and then also a slightly different approach.

Now the Great Tribulation period, while there is a whole lot about it, nevertheless I think, can be summed up fairly easily with regard to the major points of it. So what I want to do tonight is to discuss the chronology of the period of the tribulation, and we

will look at the chart and Daniel chapter 9. Then, I want to single out three outstanding things that pertain to this period, and that we ought to understand in connection with it, and conclude with the cause of this Great Tribulation or the reason why we have such a period in the biblical revelation.

Now first of all, let's turn to Daniel chapter 9, and we're going to read verses 24 through 27.

Now this passage is a very difficult passage to understand when you first read it. So if as we read through it, you say to yourself in your subconscious 'Is it possible to understand this passage?' well, you're having a normal reaction. But after all, sooner or later you must get acquainted with Daniel 9:24-27 or you ought to. So if it's difficult, well then rejoice in the fact that it is usually difficult for everyone who reads it for the first fifteen or twenty times.

It is also difficult because our Authorized Version is not accurate in some points. And it is difficult because some of the terminology is unfamiliar to most of us since we have not studied the Old Testament in great detail, particularly the Book of Isaiah upon which this passage leans rather heavily.

Sir Edward Denny once said that this particular passage is the backbone of prophecy. And in a way it is because this is the passage that sets forth for us the chronology of the past as well as the future period. And so if we're to have our minds clear with regard to the period of the tribulation and the fact that it is a future time of seven years, we must understand Daniel chapter 9, verses 24 through 27. So now let's read it before we look at the diagram and try to explain it.

Daniel is writing and remember when he uses the terms "thy people" and "thy holy city", since he is addressing Jews, he has in mind Israel the nation and the city of Jerusalem. So verse 24, "Seventy weeks"

Now let me stop at one or two spots and this is one place where we must stop, so that we will understand some basic things. "Seventy weeks" Now if we were to read that

as it is in the English text here, we would wonder if this did not mean seventy Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sundays. Seventy weeks. But actually the Hebrew text, as most of your bibles if you have a marginal note will say, the Hebrew text simply says "seventy sevens." Seventy sevens.

Now a seven is a heptad, that's the technical term for it. H, E, P, T, A, D. A heptad is a seven. Now for example, our normal weeks are heptads of days, periods in which there are seven of them. So the Hebrew text says simply "seventy sevens." Now whether it is days, months or years must be determined from the context.

Now if you look back in this chapter to verse 2, where Daniel begins the description of this vision of the seventy weeks, he says. Well, let's read verse 1 also.

"In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books (Now you see he was a Bible student and he studied the Book of Jeremiah which tells us that the captivity would be seventy years) understood by books the number of years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem."

So you see, in the light of the context here, he is talking about years. And all the through the context he has years in mind. So when we read in verse 24, "Seventy weeks" or "Seventy sevens are determined upon thy people", then we are to understand the sevens as sevens of years. Now seventy sevens of years of course will be four hundred and ninety years, seven years times seventy.

To show you that this is not some strange interpretation which I have manufactured and that this is the normal understanding of the passage, I'm going to read from the Revised Standard Version. And these translators who translated this Bible were

not noted as students of prophecy. Here we read in verse 24 of Daniel chapter 9 in the Revised Standard Version,

"Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your holy city. (So you can see, that right here at the beginning he is saying four hundred and ninety years) are decreed or determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, (with this purpose in mind) to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."

Now that is important. At the end of this four hundred and ninety year period, Daniel said everlasting righteousness shall be brought in. Now that is a clue that we have not reached the end of the four hundred and ninety year period because, as far as I can tell, everlasting righteousness has certainly not been brought in.

"And to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." And I think we should add in the light of the Hebrew text at this point, the most Holy place. He is talking about a temple.

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks (now if that's weeks of years, that will be forty-nine years), and threescore and two weeks."

Now threescore and two is three times twenty plus two. The children already know it's sixty-two. The adults are counting on their fingers, I notice. Sixty-two. Sixty-two times seven is four hundred and thirty-four, isn't it? So seven weeks is forty-nine years, threescore and two weeks of years, four hundred and thirty-four years, which makes four hundred and eighty-three years. Only one heptad is left.

"The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks of years" In other words, after the four hundred and eighty

three years. "Shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself (or shall have nothing, the Hebrew text says literally) and the people of the prince that shall come"

Now, this is not Messiah, the prince. This is the prince that shall come, not the prince who has come, Messiah the prince. "And the people of the prince that shall come." Of course, this is the antichrist, the king that Daniel has been talking about through his book.

Now you have to take my word for that because we don't have time to study the whole Book of Daniel. But Daniel is a book in which he by the revelation of God reveals to us more about the antichrist than he does about the Christ in many ways. So when he talks about the prince that shall come, he is talking about the antichrist.

"The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." Or literally, "unto the end, wars and desolations are determined."

"And he." Now the last person mentioned in the context, and this of course is the one to whom we must refer this pronoun he, was the prince that shall come, the antichrist.

"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week" of years. Now this is the last heptad, the last seven years of the four hundred and ninety.

"He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and (Now this is very difficult) and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." Or desolater.

Now the only thing that you need understand in your first acquaintance with Daniel 9 is to see that there is going to be a lot of trouble and great desolation is going to take place upon the earth according to verse 27.

Now that is Daniel 9:24 through 27. And if you're finally confused, that's perfectly alright. If you don't have it all clearly in your mind, that's perfectly alright. But let's go back over it, now, and see if we cannot understand what Daniel is trying to tell us.

Now he says "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy holy people and thy holy city," or four hundred and ninety years. And at the end of this four hundred and ninety year period of time, he says that six things will happen. The transgression will be finished. An end of sins will have been made. Reconciliation for iniquity will have been made. Everlasting righteousness shall have been brought in. The vision and prophecy shall be sealed up. The most holy place shall be anointed. So at the end of this four hundred and ninety year period, these things will take place. Think primarily of the everlasting righteousness, for he is thinking about the kingdom of the Lord Jesus when he says this. Four hundred and ninety years.

Now we must go back and ask ourselves: What does the commandment to build the city refer to? Because you see, that is the *terminus a quo*, that is, the place from which the four hundred and ninety years are measured. Now he says the commandment to build the city, notice verse 25, "That from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem," rebuild the city. Now without going into lots of detail, this is a reference to Nehemiah chapter 2, when Nehemiah was given permission by Artaxerxes to rebuild the city. Scholars debate the exact date, but generally speaking it is around four hundred and fifty-four BC.

Now I have put this it over here so we can follow this chronology, four hundred and fifty-four BC. That is the terminus a quo and that is represented by this line. So he says, "Know therefore and understand that from four hundred and fifty-four BC unto Messiah the prince shall be seven weeks." Here it is, I've put it on the diagram seven weeks of years, that's forty-nine years, and threescore and two weeks of years. No doubt this forty-nine is intended to be the approximate time when that city was rebuilt. Here was the commandment for it to be rebuilt, the permission granted by Artaxerxes. It

probably was finished about four hundred and five BC. That's the end of the sixth weeks of years.

Now if we take sixty-two weeks of years, or four hundred and thirty-four years, and subtract them from four 'o five BC, we come to twenty-nine AD more or less. Now it may be twenty-five or twenty-six, or it may be thirty. But roughly speaking, the four hundred and eighty-three years take us from this commandment to Messiah the prince, or approximately twenty-nine AD.

Now it is a remarkable fact that the time of the coming of the Lord Jesus was just about that time. In fact, Sir Robert Anderson, who was an outstanding Bible student as well as being the head of Scotland Yard in Britain, once spent a lot of research on this question of chronology in Daniel chapter 9. And he concluded after some rather exhaustive study of this point that when the Lord Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem in his triumphal entry, it was, he said, to the day four hundred and eighty-three years after the commandment to restore and rebuild the city.

Now of course, we know that the Lord Jesus did fulfill that prophecy because it says that after sixty-nine weeks, Messiah the prince shall come. Now whether it was at the triumphal entry, or whether it is the cross, or whether it is the beginning of his public ministry is beside the point. The point, the main point is that Daniel has given us here a way for Israel to recognize their Messiah when he came.

So if they had studied the prophecy of Daniel, and if they studied the other prophecies of the Old Testament, they would've known he would've been born in Bethlehem from Micah chapter 5. They would've known he was of the family of David. They would've known this and that about him.

And furthermore, they would have known from Daniel that he would have appeared at just about the time that he did. And it would have been impossible for any open-minded Jew who studied the Bible to fail to recognize Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah the prince.

So the four hundred and fifty-four BC less the seven weeks of years, less the sixty-two weeks of years, brings us to approximately the time when our Lord came. So verse 25 then tells us when Messiah shall come.

Now notice the 26th verse. "And after threescore and two weeks," that is, after the four hundred and thirty-four years which in turn followed the forty-nine, after that Messiah the prince shall be cut off, shall be cut off.

Now that is Daniel's term for the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. It is almost the identical term which Isaiah uses in his prophecy. He says,

"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? (That is, our Lord had no successors.) For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken."

Cut off. Daniel says, "After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off and have nothing." Isaiah says, "Who shall declare his generation?" He has no successors. Daniel says he shall have nothing.

Now, I have put on the board here the cross and separated it a little bit from the conclusion of the four hundred and eighty-three years to represent, if the triumphal entry is referred to, the few days after the four hundred and eighty-three years until the cross. Or perhaps if some other date might be referred to other than the triumphal entry, at least

you can see there is a slight interval between the completion of the four hundred and eighty-three years and the cutting off of Messiah, the death of Messiah.

Now, let's go on and notice the middle of the 26th verse. "And the people of the prince that shall come."

Now to understand what Daniel means by "the prince that shall come," we would have to study Daniel chapter 2, Daniel chapter 7 and Daniel chapter 8. Now we don't have time to do that. If you want to investigate this for yourself, and you certainly ought to this, go and study and particularly Daniel 7 and 8, for there Daniel delineates for us the king who shall come, the antichrist, the king over the earth.

Now this is the one he calls the prince that shall come. And he says "The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." Now we would not know for certain who "the people of the prince that shall come" would be. He doesn't tell us the nationality of this man in the Book of Daniel.

We do, however, know historically what people destroyed the city of Jerusalem. What people did? Why, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. So this man is a Roman prince, in some way, whether by nation or whether by king over a Roman type of empire, he is identified with the people who destroyed the city. He is the prince as Daniel says and "the people of the prince that shall come." So this prince that shall come belongs to the people who destroyed the city and that destruction date is seventy AD, in case you want to put it. And I have noted it here after Pentecost when the church age began. So during the period of the church age, Daniel says Jerusalem shall be destroyed by "the people of the prince that shall come."

Then he goes on to say, "And the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." Or literally, and I think this is the force of the Hebrew text, "and unto the end wars and desolations are determined." Unto the end of the four hundred and ninety-year period, the seventy weeks, wars and desolations are determined.

But what about this remaining one week? He has told us about seven weeks of years and sixty-two weeks of years. But that is only sixty-nine weeks of years. And he said at the end of seventy weeks of years, these six things mentioned in verse 24 would take place. So we still have to deal with this last heptad. Something must, some information must be given us about that.

Now I've put it here at the end of the end of the church age. In a moment I will show you why it must be placed there. But let's read the opening part of verse 27. "And he."

Now if you will just take a little pencil, if you don't mind making a mark in your Bible, and make a little circle around "he" and go back to the middle of verse 26 and write a circle around "the prince that shall come". That will show you to whom the "he" refers. It does not refer to Messiah the prince. He was mentioned in verse 25. The nearest antecedent is "the prince that shall come" or the antichrist.

"He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week." Now there is our seven year period of time. "He shall confirm the covenant with many for one seven years."

Now, I have put this seven year period of time or this last week, the one week, in the future. Now I want to show you why it must be future, why it is not something that is past. In the first place you notice in verse 26, that at the end of that verse it says in the margin "And unto the end wars and desolations are determined." In other words, he is looking on into the future and prophesying wars and desolations unto the end.

Now we surely have not reached the end yet. But that's not the primary reason. You'll notice that the events described in verse 24 have not taken place. "Everlasting righteousness" has not been brought in. "The vision and prophecy" have not been sealed. "The most holy place" has not been anointed. So these things must be future.

But the main reason why we know these things are future. We might debate these, you know, it's possible to rationalize most things in the Bible if you're determined not to believe what it says. Most things can be rationalized. But I want you to turn over

to Matthew chapter 24 for just a moment, and you shall see from this particular prophecy which our Lord himself gave that he regarded the seventieth week as future. Well, this is what we read.

Now the Lord is answering the question, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the age?"

Now verse 15, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place." Notice the holy place there, "When you see the abomination of desolation." That, by the way, is an idol. An abomination that makes desolate a holy place is an idol. What they meant was the bringing in of an idol into a holy temple that is an abomination in a temple devoted to the true God. So an abomination of desolation, an abomination that desolates, is an idol in the holy temple of God.

"When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

Now it is obvious that this time has not come to pass yet upon the earth. It is useless and it is certainly an incorrect interpretation to refer this to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem in the light of the great tribulations that have come on the earth which are far greater than that. And this tribulation is so great that there is nothing like it in the past nor will there ever be anything like it in the future.

"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets," and so on.

Now you can see from this that the Lord Jesus regarded that seventieth week of Daniel as a future week. It is a period of tribulation. So Daniel's prophecy then has set forth for us the chronology of the tribulation. It is a future period of time of seven years. We would know that then from the prophecy of Daniel.

Now since I don't want to confuse you with too many details, let's go on now to just discuss some of the outstanding characteristics of this seven year period of tribulation. This period of tribulation which follows the time of the rapture of the church will be first of all the period in which the judgment seat of Jesus Christ will take place.

Now I want you to take your Bibles and turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 9 and 10. Remember, when the Lord Jesus comes in the air, we who are alive and remain, I'm counting on being alive frankly. I hope that you do not have the privilege of coming to my funeral. And I hope I don't have the privilege of coming to your funeral either. I hope that we all are caught up into the presence of the Lord Jesus and we do not have to die.

Following the rapture of the church, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Now this judgment seat of Christ is not a judgment for the unbelievers. It is a judgment only for believers. Let's read the two verses in 2 Corinthians 5:9 and 10.

Paul says, "Wherefore we labour." Now when Paul uses the term we, unless there is something in the context plainly indicating otherwise, he is referring to believers. "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For

we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Now this event follows the rapture of the church. Just keeping your finger in this passage because we want to look at it in a little detail, take a quick look back at 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 5. Verse 5 of 1 Corinthians chapter 4. Here we read, you see the Corinthians had been doing some judging, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."

Now I want you to notice that he says we're not to judge anything before the Lord comes and when he comes, he's going to do the judging. And furthermore, and you know this is a wonderful verse, it says every man shall receive praise from the Lord.

Now obviously he's not talking about unbelievers. He's talking about believers. And he is saying that everybody, you shall have some praise from the Lord. And if you think that is a wonderful grace. I shall have some praise from the Lord, too. Every single one of us true believers shall have some praise from the Lord because, you see, if you have genuinely believed in Christ, there has to be some fruit from your faith. Otherwise your faith is not genuine faith. Faith must produce works. And so therefore, there must be some praise.

But the main thing I want you to notice is that this receiving of praise from the Lord follows the coming of the Lord. So the judgment seat of Christ follows the coming or the rapture of the church.

Now let's turn back to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. And we want to look at it carefully, try to clarify some of our thinking. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

Now, some have had a little difficulty over this because it does say in John chapter 5 that when we believe in the Lord Jesus we shall not come into judgment. And yet here it says we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Perhaps I can illustrate by a simple story which has often happened by the way. Let's suppose two friends are out hunting together. They both have their guns in their hands. And in order to get from one field to another they start to climb a barbwire fence. And due to an accident, one man's gun goes off and he shoots the other man and he dies, his business partner.

Now normally something like this would be just simply an accident. I suppose the coroner would say "accidental death" and that would be the end of the case. But let's suppose that the District Attorney is not so sure about it. It so happens when they investigate the papers of the corporation, they discover that whoever survives the other has some unusual advantages financially. And so the District Attorney just has a little bit of suspicion that things might not all of them be on the up and up. And so he insists on a trial. And they want to bring an indictment against the man responsible for the death. So they have some alternatives. They may bring a charge against him of first degree; a conviction might carry a mandatory sentence of death in some states. Or they might say, No, we could never hope to win a case like that, and it may not be that. Why not manslaughter? Now manslaughter of course will cause him to face a jury trial, but nevertheless the death penalty would not be involved. Or it's entirely possible they might say, Well, just criminal negligence. And he would be subject to a damage suit.

Now you see that the indictment determines the character of that particular trial. It might be, as I say, death might be involved, or simply a long prison term, or simply damages. In other words, the indictment determines the resulting punishment.

Now when we appear before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, the question at issue is not eternal life. The question at issue is rewards. So it is true we shall not come into judgment for the penalty of our sins. We shall never, once we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ that matter is settled. Our eternal destiny is settled once and for all. But we must appear before the judgment seat of Christ with a view to rewards.

Let me illustrate again. Let's suppose a son is operating a business for a father. But let's suppose that at the end of the year a father demands an accounting of the conduct of that business through the year. Now the result of this, or the issue of this accounting is not the sonship of the son. But it's whether he has been a good servant of the corporation. That's the issue. So he might be brought in to judgment with regard to his stewardship but not brought in to judgment with regard to his sonship.

Now that is what is involved here. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." In other words, the issue here is the service of the believer, not his sonship. The issue is rewards not eternal life. Now it is important that we see that.

Now, Dr. Johnson, what about this last thing that says "according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"? If it's good, well, then we receive good, but if it's bad, it looks as if we receive bad.

May I give you a little Greek lesson? There are several different words for bad in the New Testament . One of them means bad in the sense of evil. I might say regarding a certain immoral man, That man is a bad man. He is an evil man. But I might say with regard to a man who is lazy and doesn't do his work, I'd say He's a bad man, but I don't mean bad in the sense of evil. He may be perfectly alright, perfectly harmless, perfectly moral. He's just lazy. He's good for nothing. He's worthless. He's bad in the sense of worthless.

Now that is the word that is used here. It is the Greek word 'falon', not the word 'kakon'. But "according to that he hath done, whether it be good or worthless." If his work is good, he receives a reward. If it's worthless, he gets nothing. That's the point, you see, of the text. So, in the Great Tribulation period, the church of the Lord Jesus will be standing before the judgment seat of Christ, and we will be receiving the rewards for the work that we have done as servants of the Lord.

Now you know this is something that really should concern believers. It is often said when you say the Bible teaches that we have eternal life when we believe on the Lord Jesus, well then that suggests that we can just go out and live as we please. It does not because, you see, when you come in the family of God, discipline is in that family and God spans his children if they disobey him. In fact, he even has ultimate discipline; he will take the life of that individual such as he did Ananias and Sapphira when they disobeyed.

And furthermore he has rewards. And the believer who has the new nature wants to please the Lord who gave himself for them. And so we do not have the attitude when we learn that we have eternal life that now we can go out and live as we please. We have a new nature. And we want to please God. And furthermore we know he might paddle us, too, in the family. And we know that he has rewards. And I'd like to have a crown or two. Wouldn't you?

Well now, we're going to all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Notice, not a single one is excluded. It's not we must, all creatures. We must all the laity; there is no such thing, you know, in the New Testament. We must all, Dr. Johnson, Dr. Howard, Chip Howard, Felix Morgan, we must all. Do you know we have an appointment? If we have believed in Christ, every single one of us in this room who has believed in Christ, we have a future appointment and we cannot escape it. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Now, this then is one of the events to which we look forward during the time of the tribulation. While the tribulation is taking place on the earth, we're going to be before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ in heaven receiving rewards.

Now down on the earth, in Matthew chapter 24, there are a number of things that are stated to be transpiring. So let me very quickly turn to Matthew 24 and just try to sum up some of these things that will be transpiring on the earth.

I think, to make it simple, that there are four outstanding things that will be taking place on the earth. The first one we will call ecclesiastical. There is the rise of the antichrist. Now this is not detailed here. It is detailed in Revelation chapter 13, in Daniel chapter 7, Daniel chapter 8, Daniel chapter 11, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. These are the chapters that give the details.

But you can see the things that lead up to the final manifestation if you will notice verse 5. "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." Many shall come, think of that, saying I am the Messiah. Verse 24, "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

Now if we had time to turn to Revelation 13, we will see that one of these false individuals shall even call down fire from heaven just as Elijah did in the Old Testament. And that was the sign that the genuine God was with Elijah in the Old Testament. And so don't you know that when one of these men calls down fire from heaven and says you remember that Elijah called down fire from heaven and that was the sign that Jehovah was the true God, don't you know that there are lots of people going to be deceived when a man calls down fire from heaven? I'm so glad I'm not going to be here at that time, because I might be tempted to believe myself. [Laughter] That's right.

So, there will be the rise of the antichrist during this period of time, the period of the tribulation. We think that we have seen some outstanding examples of evil men in our day. Adolf Hitler, can the antichrist be worse than Hitler? Mussolini, can the antichrist be worse than that stupid little Italian, you know? Stalin, that vile evil man, can the antichrist possibly be worse Joseph Stalin? Or you just name the men whom we've had contact with in our day. Let me tell you, all of these men are like choir boys in comparison with the antichrist and the false prophet who shall come. If you should cloth Stalin in the white robes of a choir boy, that's the way he would look in comparison with

the man who shall come, "the prince of the people that shall come." Apparently he is going to be responsible for one great world religious system opposed to God.

And furthermore, there will be a counterfeit of the Trinity, for behind him John says is the dragon who wields the real authority, and he identifies the dragon as Satan. Satan is the anti-God. And then there is the beast, the antichrist who is the anti-Christ. And finally there is the false prophet who causes men to worship the antichrist. And that is the work of the Holy Spirit today to cause men to worship Jesus Christ. So there is the anti-Spirit or the unholy spirit.

If we have an eternal trinity of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, in the time of the Great Tribulation, there shall rise an infernal trinity composed of the dragon, the anti-God, the beast who is the anti-Christ, and the second beast who is the unholy spirit, a counterfeit of the trinity of God. No wonder that men are likely to be deceived.

Secondly, there is great political doings during the time of the Great Tribulation. Will you notice the 7th verse of Matthew 24? "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom."

Apparently there is a great struggle for world government, world supremacy, nation rising up against nation and kingdom against kingdom. Of course, these things have been transpiring down through the centuries. But I believe that we are noticing that, like the birth pangs of a woman, the struggles of nations are becoming more severe and intense as the years go by. And we are seeing some evidences of that in our own time in that the period of time between the great struggles, the great wars is becoming less and less and less.

There will also be great physical disturbances. Notice again the 7th verse. "And there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places."

I think that probably what is meant by this, since we have had famines and we have had pestilences, and we have had earthquakes down through the years, is again not

so much that we shall be having these things. We've had these things. But rather they shall become more and more severe and that they shall be coming at the same time.

Now I'm not enough of an expert to know whether the earthquakes that we're seeing now are more severe than earthquakes in the past. I think more people are destroyed in earthquakes now. But we have had some very severe earthquakes in the past. But at any rate, these are the signs: great physical disturbances. And we have already read from verse 15 on through verse 26, and there the Lord speaks of some others.

Finally, there is evidence of great spiritual things transpiring during the period of the Great Tribulation. Notice the 14th verse, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

Do you know that the greatest revival that will have ever taken place will take place during this time of the Great Tribulation? For according to Revelation chapter 7 and chapter 14, God is going to move by the Holy Spirit in the nation of the Jews and call to himself one hundred and forty-four thousand of them who shall go out and preach the gospel and as a result of the preaching of these one hundred and forty-four thousand Apostle Paul's, a great multitude which no man can number shall come to know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If you think the Graham revivals or campaigns are big, they are as nothing to the campaigns that shall take place during the time of the Great Tribulation.

Isaiah the prophet said, "When thy judgments are in the earth, then the inhabitants of the earth learn righteousness." And so the period of the tribulation is going to be a period of great judgment, but it is also a period of great salvation. It is necessary for God to do this in order to bring some to himself.

So during this time there will be the rise of the antichrist, the rise of national disturbances, the rise of natural disturbances and the preaching of the gospel. It will conclude with the Marriage Supper of the Lamb when the church is united to the Lord Jesus in the full possession of all of the blessings of sonship to him.

You know in ancient times marriages were different from marriages today. Marriages had three parts to them. There was the time of negotiation, and then there was the time of presentation of the bride to the groom, and then there was the time of celebration.

Negotiations were carried on by the parents. If I had a daughter in those days, I would carry on negotiations with another parent over the marriage of my daughter. And I would make the marriage.

Now I have often wondered whether things were better then than now. Sometimes I think so when I see some of the young men around. I'm not sure I want my daughter to be married to them, you know. And I would like to have a hand in this. Unfortunately, she's not giving me any hand in this. We're living in different days. If we're young, we don't like the idea. If we're older, we think it's pretty good. But in those days, they made the marriages.

Now the marriage might be consummated when the children were young or when they were close to marriageable age. After the marriage had been negotiated, then there came a time when the bride was presented to the bridegroom. And this involved a little bit of a ceremony. The bridegroom went to the bride's house with his entourage and he took the bride and together they went to the place where they were going to begin to live together and they had a marriage feast. And sometimes this lasted for a week. They rejoiced over the marriage.

Now in the Book of Revelation chapter 19, John describes a Marriage Feast of the Lamb. It is apparently the consummation of the marriage which has already taken place between the church the bride of Christ and the Lord Jesus. For you see, when we believe in him, Paul says we are married to him. And when the whole church is completed at the rapture as the bride of Christ, that is the term used of the church in Ephesians 5, then when we are all together, we shall be presented to him and become the bride of Christ in reality. We are already his bride legally. Negotiations have been consummated through

the gospel the Father has united us to his Son. But then there shall be the celebration of it and that will last throughout all the ages of eternity. We shall celebrate the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

One last thing, I've got to stop, my time is up. Why this period of great tribulation? Why? Well first of all, it is a time of judgment upon the nation Israel because they have rejected the son. It is called a time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. It is because of their rejection of Christ at Calvary.

But it is also a time of judgment upon the Gentiles because we too have rejected Christ as a whole. Only a select company called the church has responded to the gospel. We, like the Jews, are not responding to the gospel of Christ, and so the tribulation period is a time of judgment upon the Gentiles as well. So it is a period of judgment, but it is also, as I've said, a period of salvation as well.

Well, our time is up. We must stop, so let's have a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Heavenly Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the gospel of the Lord Jesus. We thank Thee for the revelation concerning the future. We pray that we may, in the light of the fact that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, serve Thee acceptably in the time which thou dost give us. If there should be someone, Lord, who has not yet believed in Christ, O God, will thou bring them to him so that they may not have to face the Great Tribulation period and ultimately eternal death. For we ask it in Christ's name. Amen.