

THE TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE

Those who know the Middle East well are telling us that the amount of tension there right now is unsurpassed in modern times. Some are concerned about “world war” breaking out!

In the context of redemptive history, God has TWO distinct witness programs. The first is ISRAEL and the second is the CHURCH. However, first and foundational is ISRAEL. Paul tells the largely Gentile (by background) church that we are “**grafted in**” and that “the root [Jewish heritage] supports you” Rom. 11:17-18). The one true God has revealed Himself in history through the nation of Israel, and then building on that revelation, through the Church. However, the Church is a “parenthesis” program and when God completes His Church then He will again resume and complete His program with Israel.

In the Bible, God reveals Himself as the “**God of Israel**” 203 times. When Moses asked God what His Name was, God identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and building on that, declared His eternal name to be “**I AM**”. The eternal Name of God is uniquely identified with this people group called ISRAEL (cf. Ex. 3:13-15).

NEVER is God called the God of any other particular ethnic group! He is the God of the nation of Israel. He is bound to this nation by covenant (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17) and has uniquely chosen to reveal Himself to the world via this people group. Whether in blessing or in cursing, Israel is God’s unique witness nation (cf. Deut. 28:8-10, 45-46; Isa. 43:10-13, 21; Jer. 31:31-37; Rom. 11:12, 24-27). Scholars estimate that about 70% of the Bible text deals in one fashion or another with the people of Israel.

The God of Israel is the true God. This is the God of the Bible. And of course, the God of Israel is also the God of the Church.

The Bible does not tell us why God chose Israel other than that He “**loves**” Israel (cf. Deut. 7:7-8). This is His divine prerogative! But, whatever God loves is hated by Satan.

From the very beginning, Israel has been a “**miracle**” nation. The conception of Isaac was a miracle (cf. Rom. 4:19). And, the continuing preservation of Israel has been God’s providential doing. However, because Israel has been a stiff-necked and rebellious people, God has allowed the Gentiles to abuse His chosen people as a form of discipline.

To this date, Israel as a nation has not submitted to God's discipline and repented. But, one day that is going to change.

As Christians, we are fond of saying, ***"The best is yet to come!"*** And indeed, it is. And regarding Israel, we can also say, "The best is yet to come!" But, there is a catch. Before the best can come, the WORST must come.

After the Rapture of the Church, a terrible time of judgment is going to come upon the entire world, which is commonly called THE TRIBULATION PERIOD. We know from Daniel 9:27 that this will be a 7-year period of time.

Revelation 3:10 (NKJV)

10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from **the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world**, to test those who dwell on the earth.

Note that the true Church will be kept from this time of trial. The word ***"church"*** or ***"churches"*** is mentioned 19 times in Rev. 1-3, and then is not found again until after the Tribulation Period is over, as found in Rev. 22:16.

In Rev. 2 and 3, prior to the Tribulation Period, the repeated refrain in addressing the churches is constantly: ***"hear what the Spirit says to the churches"***. However, in Rev. 13:9, which in context is within the Tribulation Period, it simply says, ***"If anyone has an ear, let him hear."*** It is a significant argument from silence that the Church is not found represented in the Tribulation Period.

Jesus will deliver the Church from the wrath of Tribulation judgment that is to come upon the entire world (cf. 1 Thess. 1:10, 5:9).

God will judge the world for its sin and for how it has abused His people Israel. However, in the Tribulation Period, Israel will suffer the MOST. As God's firstborn, she was in a position of favor and prominence, and therefore Israel receives DOUBLE of both blessing and cursing (cf. Ex. 4:22). Blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience. To whom much is given, much is required (cf. Isa. 40:2; Jer. 16:18; Lk. 12:48).

Amos 3:2 (NKJV)

2 "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; **Therefore** I will punish you for all your iniquities."

But, the end goal in God allowing this terrible time of suffering to come upon Israel is so that He might break her and bring her to conversion and restoration. God wants to BLESS Israel and fulfill all His covenant promises; but in order to do so, Israel must first come to repentance. It will happen, but it will take the Tribulation Period, also known as the 70th week of Daniel, to bring it about. The time of Jacob's trouble must come first to break her and then the time of blessing will come. God must break Israel to make her!

Acts 3:19–21 (NKJV)

19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,
20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,
21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.