

תשפ"ד 5784 Chanukah

According to tradition, Chanukah is a great celebration of victory for the Jewish people over the Greeks. It is most significant that, according to the book of Daniel chapter 8, the antichrist empire will be known by the same Hebrew word **יון** which in modern Hebrew relates to Greece (See Daniel 8:21). In ancient Hebrew, it is proper to understand this word as referring to Europe in a general sense. Daniel calls this empire "*the Goat*" and one reads in the New Covenant that Yeshua, in the End Times, will separate the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:32-33).

In previous articles, it has been discussed that there is an End Times connection concerning Chanukah. This is based on Daniel 12:11-12 and the extra 75 days from 1,260 to 1,335. There is always 75 days from Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) to the first day of Chanukah. The text states that those who wait and arrive at 1,335 days will be blessed. Many understand this as referring to the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom which will take place on Chanukah. In regard to the events of the End Times, there is much confusion. The primary reason for this is that individuals base their eschatology upon what they hear from others, rather than what is stated directly in the Scriptures. Of course everybody says this concerning others who do not have the same view concerning a theological position. Therefore, I would like to use this article to ask some Biblically-based questions. These questions should be viewed by you as a type of "homework assignment". If you will take the time to research them thoroughly, you will benefit greatly in your understanding of the End Times.

I am sure you have heard Daniel's 70th week (the final seven years prior to the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom) called "*The Tribulation*". I heard recently a very well-known Bible teacher say, "The Bible calls Daniel's 70th week the Tribulation." My first question is simply, "Where in the Bible is Daniel's 70th week called "*The Tribulation*?" I suggest that before you exert your time in looking for the Biblical verse, search first the internet for the numerous people who teach this as truth and see if they provide any Scripture to support their position. I welcome anyone who can prove me wrong and provide a verse from the Bible which teaches that Daniel's 70th week should be known as "*The Tribulation*". Frequently, those who do offer Scriptural evidence for Daniel's 70th week being called "*The Tribulation*" cite Daniel 12:1.

גוי מהיות נהיתה-ל אֶשֶׁר, צָרָה עַת וְהִיְתָה, עִמָּךְ בְּנֵי-עַל הַעֲמֹד, הַגָּדוֹל הַשֵּׁר מִיִּכְאֵל יַעֲמֹד הֵיא וּבֵעַת
בְּסִפְרָ כְּתוּב הַנִּמְצָא-כֹּל, עִמָּךְ יִמְלֹט הֵיא וּבֵעַת; הֵיא הָעַת עַד

"And at that time, Michael, the great official, the one who stands concerning the Children of Israel, Your people; and there will be a time of tribulation which has not been since the nation until this time and at this time Your people will escape, all who are found written in the book."

This verse does not relate to all of Daniel's 70th week, but specifically the second half of these seven years, when Israel will be persecuted by the antichrist for rejecting him at the middle of the week, when the antichrist will commit the Abomination of Desolation. Another verse which is often stated is Matthew 24:21,

εσται γαρ τοτε θλιψις μεγαλη οια ου γεγονεν απ αρχης κοσμου εως του νυν ουδ ου μη γενηται

“For then there will be great tribulation, which has not been from the beginning of the world until now, and no, not not will be.”

I translated the last part of this verse in the most literal manner in order to assist the reader to understand the uniqueness of this period of time. This verse provides a great example of how certain individuals run to any verse that contains the word tribulation without properly understanding it. Had one correctly studied the context, then this person would realize that in Matthew 24:15, the Abomination of Desolation is mentioned by Yeshua. This has significant implications. The fact that *great tribulation* is mentioned in verse 21, and this occurs after the Abomination of Desolation means that verse 21 refers to the second half of Daniel’s 70th week. In addition to this, Yeshua states,

πασιν μαρτυριον εις οικουμενη τη ολη εν βασιλειας της ευαγγελιον το τουτο κηρυχθησεται και τελος το ηξει τοτε και εθνεσιν τοις

“And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world for a testimony to all the nations and then the end will come.” Matthew 24:14

Those who insist on using the term “*The Tribulation*” also state that **all seven of these years** consist of the wrath of G-d. Again, can one provide a verse that supports such an assertion? It simply cannot be proven from the Bible that all of Daniel’s 70th week consists of G-d pouring out His wrath. While it is very true that believers in Yeshua, through one’s acceptance of the Gospel, will **not** experience any of G-d’s wrath (See 1 Thessalonians 5:9), there is no Biblical justification that I know of which supports the assertion that the wrath of G-d begins at the beginning of the final seven years. Once again, I would be happy to admit my error if such Biblical testimony could be provided.

Another statement which I frequently hear stated is that **The Great Tribulation** is the worst time of the wrath of G-d and takes place during the **second half** of Daniel’s 70th week. Matthew 24:21 is often cited as a Biblical verse to support this perspective. There is a serious problem with such an interpretation. In Matthew 24:21, the phrase in Greek appears without the definite article, *μεγαλη θλιψις*. This means that this verse is only speaking about a period of time which will consist of a great amount of tribulation, and does not relate to what is meant when theologians refer to “*The Great Tribulation*”. This term only appears by name in one place in the Bible,

και ειρηκα αυτω κυριε συ οιδας και ειπεν μοι ουτοι εισιν οι ερχομενοι εκ της θλιψεως της μεγαλης και επλυναν τας στολας αυτων και ελευκαναν στολας αυτων εν τω αιματι του αρνιου

“And I said to him, lord you know and he said to me, these are the ones who came out of the Great Tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Revelation 7:14

Please notice the difference between the two phrases in the original language:

θλιψις μεγαλη and **της** θλιψεως **της** μεγαλης.

I have placed the two definite articles in bold to show the difference between these two phrases. The definite article is simply the word “*the*” and its purpose is to specify or differentiate between two or more objects. Therefore, Matthew 24:21 simply informs the reader

that after the Abomination of Desolation there will be great tribulation in Israel; whereas in Revelation 7:14, one learns that believers will go through what John learns is called specifically *The Great Tribulation*. Even though it is almost universally taught that *The Great Tribulation* relates to the wrath of G-d, when one reads the book of Revelation, the wrath of G-d does not begin until chapter 8 and therefore *The Great Tribulation* is actually prior to the wrath of G-d and is unrelated to it. The reason for this time of persecution of believers prior to the wrath of G-d during the first half of Daniel's 70th week being called *The Great Tribulation* is to emphasize how important to G-d are those who are suffering for their faith in Yeshua. When studying the book of Revelation, one learns that John places a priority upon those believers who will be experiencing the things mentioned in his book. There is absolutely no Biblical basis for asserting that *The Great Tribulation* is after the Rapture. Again, it is very important to remember that the promise believers have from G-d is that we will never experience the wrath of G-d. It is never promised that we will not be persecuted or suffer tribulation.

On the contrary, in the book of Acts one reads,

επιστηριζοντες τας ψυχας των μαθητων παρακαλουντες εμμενειν τη πιστει και οτι δια πολλων θλιψεων δει ημας εισελθειν εις την βασιλειαν του θεου

"Strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging to remain in the faith and that because of much tribulation it is necessary for us to enter into the Kingdom of G-d."

Acts 14:22

When examining many places in the New Covenant, one learns that it is normal for Yeshua's followers to suffer persecution and go through tribulation; in fact, He promises His disciples that such suffering will increase in the End Times. In short, there is no Biblical evidence which teaches that the Rapture will occur before the coming of the antichrist empire. In regard to the Rapture, there is not any Scriptural reason to define the timing of the Rapture in light of Daniel's 70th week. It is most common to speak of the Rapture as Pre-Tribulational, Mid-Tribulational, or Post-Tribulational. Such terminology is without Biblical support. All one can know with certainty concerning the Rapture is that it will take place prior to the wrath of G-d beginning.

The final matter which I would like to address in this article concerns one whom Paul mentions in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 called the "*Restraîner*". There is a great desire for people to know the identity of this "*Restraîner*". This is not possible and Bible teachers should avoid engaging in this pursuit. In the relevant passage, it is frequently translated as,

"And you know what is now restraining him..." 2 Thessalonians 2:6a English Standard Version

Most translations render this verse as though the identity of the "*Restraîner*" one should know. This is incorrect and not the intent of the verse. When examining the verse in the original language it states,

και νυν το κατεχον οιδατε εις το αποκαλυφθηναι αυτον εν τω εαυτου καιρω

"And now, the restrainer, you know for the revealing of him in his season."

2 Thessalonians 2:6

What is being taught in this verse is not that one knows the identity of the “*Restrainer*” but rather what the purpose of the “*Restrainer*” is; namely to restrain the antichrist from being revealed until the proper time, i.e., according to G-d’s timing. It is frequently asserted that the “*Restrainer*” is the Church. This simply is an impossibility, as the word for the “*Restrainer*” in verse 6 is το κατεχον and is neuter in gender, while in verse 7 the word is ο κατεχων and is masculine. It is most unusual that the same entity would appear in this passage in two different genders. What is the purpose for this? The answer is that this provides a Biblical clue that the identity of the “*Restrainer*” is not what the Holy Spirit wants the reader to focus upon, but rather its purpose. Please be aware that the Greek word for Church is ἐκκλησία and appears in the feminine. It is improper and without support from the Bible to teach that it is **only after the end of the Church age**, i.e., the Rapture, that the antichrist can be revealed. The popular website, gotquestions.org states,

“Evil is restrained right now; once the Church Age ends, the hindrance to evil will be removed...”

This website has many problems in how it answers questions concerning the End Times. They base many of their answers on assumptions rather than proper exegesis of Scriptural passages. For example, they also state,

“Second Thessalonians 2 is clear that the removal of the restrainer’s influence precedes the revealing of the Antichrist. Given free rein during the tribulation, the lawless one will ‘use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders’ to deceive the people of the earth (Verses 9-10).”

Although I agree with much of this quotation, there exists a problem. If the antichrist is given free rein during at least a portion of Daniel’s 70th week, which I agree he will have, how can one also assert, as gotquesitons.org does, that all of Daniel’s 70th week consists of the wrath of G-d? The fact of the matter is that during the first half of Daniel’s 70th week, the antichrist will have indeed free rein to do pretty much as he wants. This is based upon what is written in Revelation 13:5,

και εδοθη αυτω στομα λαλουν μεγαλα και βλασφημιας και εδοθη αυτω εξουσια ποιησαι μηνας τεσσαρακοντα δυο

“And it was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemy; and was given to him authority to act 42 months.”

The implications of this verse reveal that during the first half of Daniel’s 70th week, the antichrist will act as he desires. He will do mighty acts to deceive and the character of his empire will be blasphemous. It will be during this time he or his empire will persecute, imprison, and kill many believers. Again, there is no Biblical support that I am aware of which can offer Scriptural evidence that **all of Daniel’s 70th week consists of the wrath of G-d**. The wrath of G-d will only begin, according to the book of Revelation, after three events: the Abomination of Desolation, the sealing of 144,000 in Revelation chapter 7, and the Rapture, Revelation 7:9-12.

My hope is that each one who reads this brief article will indeed explore these questions I raise, study the word of G-d and not rely upon one’s own understanding or what they simply have heard others say. Studying about the End Times will give us the perspective which each of us needs as these days drawn near. Shalom