

Introduction to the End-Times

3. The Rapture and Tribulation



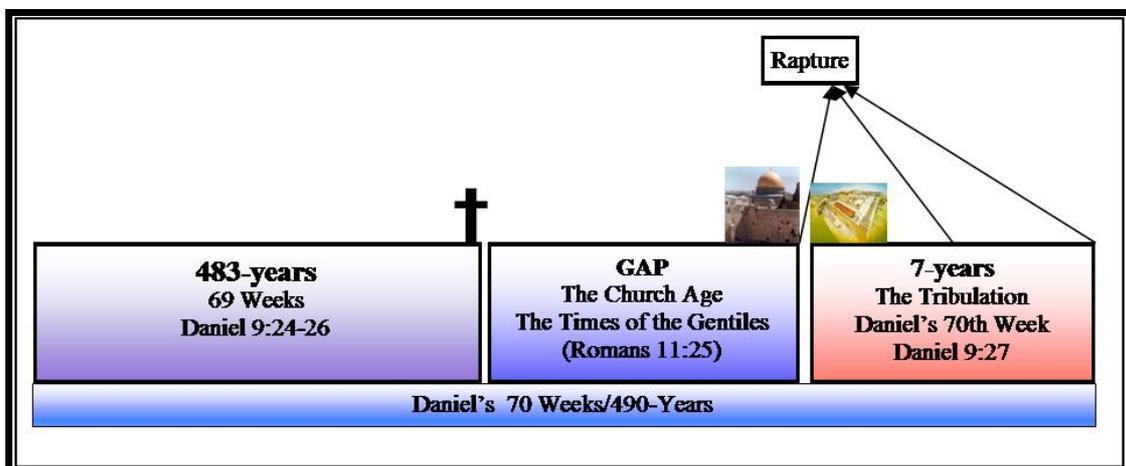
The signs leading to the return of Christ are clearly defined in scripture. Before Jesus' crucifixion, He told Israel they would not see Him again until they recognized Him as their Messiah (Matthew 23:39). Scripture, in the Old and New Testaments links Christ return with the events surrounding Jerusalem, Israel and the Temple Mount. These three places play a prominent focal point in the period known as the "Tribulation".

Over 500-years before the birth of Jesus, Daniel wrote about the exact day of Messiah's death. This prophecy (Daniel's 70 Weeks), in Daniel chapter 9, was revealed to Daniel by the Angel Gabriel, in answer to Daniel prayer for the restoration of his people, the Jews back to the land of Israel after being captives in Babylon for close to 70 years. Gabriel, in answering Daniel, told Daniel a 490-year period was determined on his people (The Jewish people) and his holy city (Jerusalem). Most of this period, 483-years, except for the last 7 would be complete, when the Messiah was killed. According to calculations, this corresponds exactly to Christ death in Jerusalem on Passover A.D. 33.

At the death of Messiah, the 490-year period determined on the Jewish people and Jerusalem stopped. In the tribulation, the seven-years remaining on the prophetic clock, restarts and ends with the return of the Messiah, who was killed at His first coming (Daniel

9:26). In the tribulation, God deals with the world in judgment. At the end of this period, a repentant Israel finally understands, Jesus Christ, who the Romans crucified, at the urging of the High Priests, was the Messiah. They call out to Him, "the one pierced" (Zechariah 12:10) who returns with power and great glory at Armageddon (Har-Megiddo), the hills of Megiddo.

The other question many people ask regarding this period is what happens to the church? Does the church go through the tribulation with Israel? Does God pour out his wrath on the church? The questions regarding the Church, Israel and the Tribulation are answered in an event commonly known as the "Rapture". The Rapture is the resurrection of those who "died in Christ" and those who are alive when Christ returns. The timing of the Rapture is a controversial issue for many churches today. The Rapture itself is not an issue for those who hold to a literal understanding of scripture. The question for many is when does the rapture occur in relation to the Tribulation and the return of Christ?



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The Rapture

What is the rapture?

In simple terms, the Rapture is the resurrection of the dead in Christ, known as the first resurrection. Derived from the Latin word *rapio* meaning, “Caught up”. The “Rapture” teaches Christ will descend from Heaven, and call those who know Him into Heaven. Those alive are transformed into their resurrected body, at the same time; the dead in Christ will also receive their resurrection bodies in the twinkling of an eye. (I Thess 4:15-17, I Cor. 15:52) This is part of the First Resurrection.

When is the Rapture?

When Christ comes, how will the Church be involved in his coming? For those who hold to a literal *pre-millennial*¹ understanding of scripture, there are three prevalent views of when the rapture occurs in relation to the tribulation. These views are known as, *pre-tribulation*², *mid-tribulation*³ and *post-tribulation*⁴. All three views focus around the tribulation in relation to when the rapture will occur. According to Jesus’ own words, He will come in glory and power after the tribulation of those days.

29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

30 "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory
Matthew 24:29-30

The question, where is the Church when Jesus returns with Glory and Power after the tribulation? Does the Church suffer in the tribulation? Paul writes about the Church being “Caught up” to meet the Lord in the “Air”. Paul in I Corinthians refers to this as the resurrection, which occurs in “twinkling of an eye”, for the dead (sleeping) and the living at the same time. The change Paul refers to the transformation of our bodies from an earthly mortal body to an eternal heavenly body.

Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,
52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
I Corinthians 15:51-52

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.
I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Paul, was writing to the Church at Thessalonica because some had felt they had missed the Lord's return. Paul wrote the letter to explain the series of events which occurs when the Lord comes for His church. From these two portions of scripture, we can understand this regarding the Lord's coming for the Church.

- His coming involves the “Dead in Christ” and the “Living in Christ”

¹ The belief we are in a period prior to the Millennium. Those who view the Bible as literal and Revelation as “Futurist” have this view.

² The view before the seven year tribulation, those who know Christ will be raptured or caught up to be with Christ and return with him at the Second Coming or Glorious Return.

³ The view that at the mid-point of the Tribulation, Christ will descend from heaven and call those who know him into heaven.

⁴ The view that immediately following the tribulation period, Christ will catch up his church and then return with them in his Second Coming. Matthew 24:29

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- The speed of the event is like the “Twinkling of an eye”
- God will bring with Jesus, the “Dead in Christ” to the clouds
- Jesus will descend from Heaven with a shout
- The “Dead in Christ” rise first (Their bodies)
- The living in Christ follow being changed from mortal to eternal bodies
- The living and the dead “In Christ” meet Christ in the clouds
- They shall always be with the Lord

The question is when does this event occur in relation to the tribulation? There are three different views to the timing of the rapture. Each view uses scripture to justify their position.

Pre-tribulation Rapture

Pre-tribulation believes that before the tribulation, *Daniel's 70th week*, the church will be raptured into the presence of the Lord. Those who are left will suffer through a period of seven years of tribulation. During this period Israel, will come to know Jesus as Messiah at which time the Lord will return to judge the earth in his “Glorious appearing”.

The argument for this position is based on several points:

- Jesus warns no man knows the “Day or hour” of His return (Imminence) . (Matthew 24:36,50, 25:13) With the other positions we would know the day of his return.
- The distinction between the Church and Israel, The church fulfills the “Fullness of the gentiles” (Romans 11;25) Israel is restored to her position before the fall
- God would pour his wrath on his own church, which is not God’s method in the past, For example, Noah and his family, Lott and Sodom, Rahab and Jericho, Babylonian captives and Jerusalem

Mid-tribulation Rapture

Mid-tribulation believes the church will endure the first 3 1/2 years of the *70th week of Daniel*. Before the great-tribulation when God pours out his wrath, He will catch-up his church at the middle of this seven year period. The church will return with Christ in his “Glorious appearing” following the “Great tribulation”

- The Promise of Tribulation: Since the church was promised tribulation, we can expect to experience the first half of the tribulation. (Matthew 24:1-9)
- Paul taught that there would first be a time of apostasy (2 Thes.2:3) and that perilous times shall come” (2 Tim. 3:10).
- Nature of Seals and Trumpets:, The seal and trumpet judgments of Revelation in the first 3.5 years are not manifestations of divine wrath. God is merely withdrawing his restraints and man is reaping what he is sowing.
- Argument from Revelation 11: Revelation 11 occurs during the time of the rapture. The two witnesses, “Caught up”, raptured, into heaven are accompanied by the rest of the church. The great voice is the shout of I Thessalonians 4:16.

Post-tribulation Rapture

Post-Tribulation believes that before the “Glorious appearing” the church is raptured to be with the Lord and returns with him in the Glorious appearing. Post-tribulation holds the church will go thru the great tribulation period, preceding the Second Advent.

- Historical argument: The historical doctrine has been the rapture is an event that would precede the glorious return of Christ immediately followed by the judgment seat of Christ. In which the all men would go before the throne of Christ.
- C. Promise of tribulation: Another argument is the promise of tribulation given to the church. Passages such as Luke 23:27-31, Matthew 24:9-11, Mark 13:9-13 are promises of tribulation to the church and not Israel.

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- Wheat and Tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-45): An interpretation of the Wheat and Tares places the "Saints" the Wheat and the "Unsaved" the tares side by side till the harvest. Jesus saying, "Let both grow together until the harvest". The harvest is the rapture of the believers at the end, not prior to a tribulation period.

The Tribulation

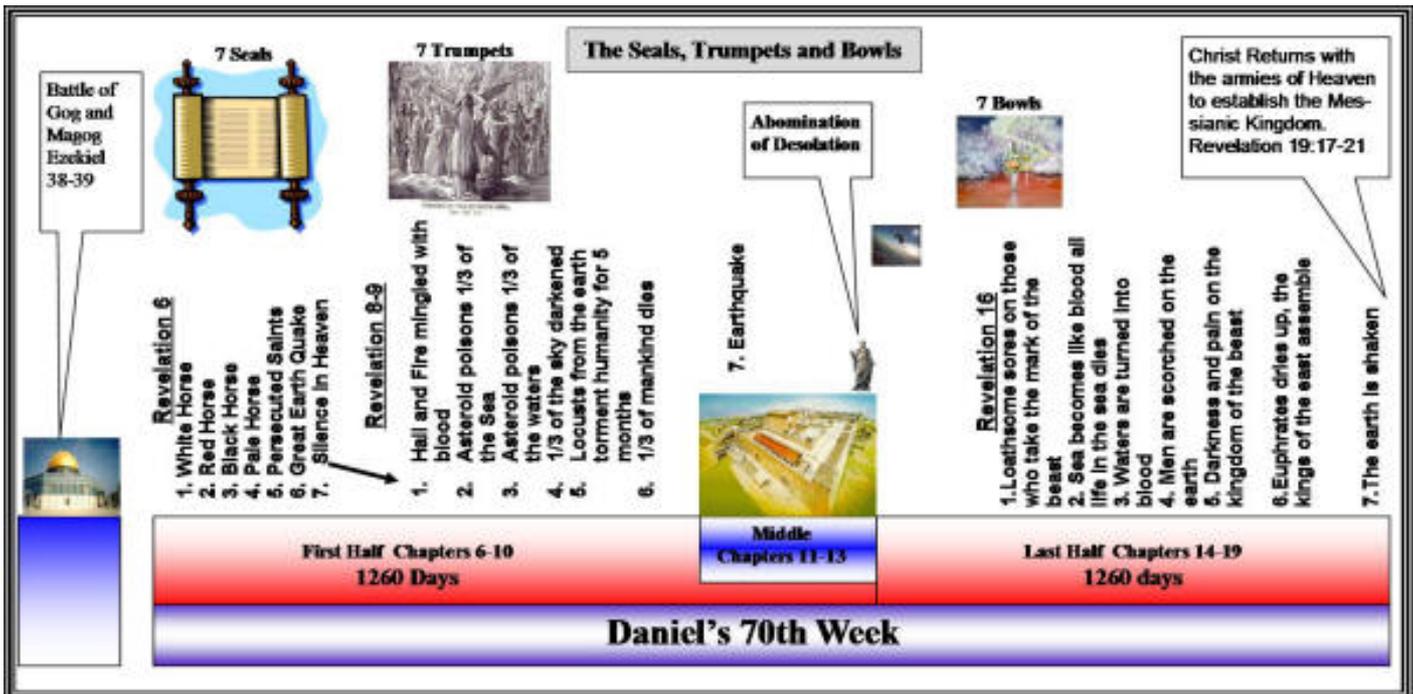
The Tribulation period is a seven-year period, when God deals with judgment on nations. During this period, Israel becomes the central focus of attention. This time is unlike any other since the world began and never to be repeated again. According to Jesus, unless the days were shortened "no flesh would be saved". (Matthew 24:21-22)

According to the Seventy weeks of Daniel and other scripture, this period begins with a covenant or agreement (Peace agreement) between Israel and many. The Antichrist allows the Jewish Temple to be rebuilt, confirming the agreement through military might with the world. Thus begins the tribulation period.

27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate." Daniel 9:27

The Tribulation period is broken into three distinct parts in scripture:

- The first-half of the seven-year agreement (3 ½ years) (Revelation 6-10)
- The middle of the seven-year agreement (30 days) (Revelation 11-13)
- The last-half of the seven-year agreement (3 ½ years) (Revelation 14-19)



The First-half of the Tribulation

27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate." Daniel 9:27

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The beginning of the Daniel's seventy week, or the tribulation starts with a seven-year agreement allowing Temple sacrifice and worship in the Third Temple. This will worldwide conflict between Islam and Israel, where Israel defeats her enemies. This event is described in Ezekiel 38 and 39, is known as the battle of Gog and Magog. This worldwide war cause the necessity, for a world wide peace agreement between Israel and the world, allowing the Jewish Temple to exist in the 3rd most holy site to Muslims.

John, in the book of Revelation, is caught up into heaven to witness the events taking place. In Heaven, John sees the Throne of God (Revelation 4-5), On the throne God has a seven-sealed scroll, which no man can open except the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ who died for the sins of the world. Christ takes the scroll from the hand of His Father, and all Heaven celebrates. When Christ begins to open the seals on the scroll God's judgments begin to take place.

The Seal Judgments (Revelation 6)

When Christ opens the first four seals, four colored horses are seen by John, each horse represents a different aspect of events taking place in the first half of the tribulation.



1. White Horse: Pictures the false peace made by the Antichrist at the start of the tribulation.

2. Red Horse: Peace is taken from the earth, the result of war

3. Black Horse: Massive inflation resulting from the war as people look for food.

4. Pale Horse: As the result of war, famine, disease and wild animals, ¼ of the earth population dies.

John in Revelation chapters 6:2-8, describes what seems to be the result of a nuclear war. With the spread of nuclear weapons, and the potential outbreak of war between large population centers, its not hard to imagine ¼ of the earth population dying. Exactly as described by John, what would follow in such a war would be lack of food, because of contamination, followed by death and disease as weakened immune systems quickly fall to disease.

5. Persecution of believers: When the fifth seal is opened John sees, the souls of believers in heaven who died for their testimony and the word of God. They are told, to wait and be patient until the rest of martyrs arrived.

During the first half of the tribulation, many will come to Christ as events in the Bible begin to unfold. During this period, 2 witnesses in Jerusalem, Elijah and some feel Enoch of Moses (Revelation 11:1-12) will witnesses to the whole world. They will be proclaiming God's judgments on the earth. Many will come to Christ only to face death at the hands of the False Prophet and his religious system. Christ through John is telling those in the tribulation, not to fear death. Death because of Christ is only an entrance into Heaven.

6. Great Earthquake: The sixth seal unleashes a great earthquake on the earth, the sky becomes black and meteorites strike the earth.

The sixth seal puts fear into the people on the earth; causing many recognize their own mortality. This puts in motion the next series of judgments, which cause even great destruction to the earth. God in His mercy is giving humanity a chance to repent and turn. Death should not be feared by believers but welcomed.

Revelation Chapter 7

John between the sixth seal and the opening of the seventh sees **144,000 Jews** from the 12,000 from the 12 tribes of Israel. They are sealed servants of God, who proclaim the Gospel during the great tribulation period. Following this, John sees a **great multitude** of believers in Heaven gathered out of the nations who were killed during the tribulation for their faith.

7. Silence in heaven for ½ hour: The opening of the seventh seal brings forth the seven trumpet judgments.



The Trumpet Judgments (Revelation 8-9)

When the seventh seal is opened, the seven angels before God's throne were given seven trumpets. The first four trumpet judgments result in calamities striking the earth. When fifth and sixth trumpets sound, these result in demonic attacks upon humanity causing another 1/3 of humanity to die in war.

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1. Hail, Fire & Blood: When the first angel sounds vegetation on the earth is burnt. During the first 3.5 years the earth suffers from the lack of rainfall, so the earth becomes dry and parched. John describes 1/3 of the trees and all grass on the earth burning. He describes the result of either volcanic activity or meteorites striking the earth, igniting the vegetation. (Revelation 8:7)



2. Great Mountain burning: The second angel sounds, and what appears to John as a burning mountain strikes the sea. This causes destruction of 1/3 of the ships, and 1/3 of sea life. (Revelation 8:8-9) This mountain is probably is the first of two asteroids to strike the earth.

3. Great Asteroid: The third angel sounds, and John describes a great star (Gr. Aster) which strikes the earth poisoning 1/3 of the rivers and springs of water. (Revelation 8:10-11) This is probably the second part of the first asteroid, which poisons the drinking water as it strikes the earth, breaking upon entry distributing its contents over the earth. (Revelation 8:10-11) There are special scientific bodies funded

throughout the world to examine NEO's or Near Earth Objects and track them. They are rated as to what potential harm they could render the earth.

4. Third of sky darkened: When the fourth angel sounds, 1/3 of the sky was struck and darkened. This might be the result of volcanic activity, the burning fires of the earth vegetation, and from the asteroids striking the earth. (Revelation 8:12-13)

5. Demonic Locusts; The fifth angel sounds, and John sees an angel descend into a pit in the abyss (Hell) and loose what appears to be locusts. These locust have the power to sting those without the "Seal of God" (The lost) for 5 months. Those who are stung want to die, but cannot because of the pain. Here God's mercy is again demonstrated, moving the lost to a point of decision about their eternity. (Revelation 9:1-12)

6. Demonic Horsemen: Following the 5 months, the sixth angel sounds, and four fallen angels bound at the Euphrates river are unleashed. These four angels lead 200 million other demons, who John describes as horsemen, who bring the armies of east. This war with the East and North, against the armies of Antichrist results in the death of another 1/3 of humanity. (Revelation 9:13-2, Daniel 11:44-45)

At this point, at least ½ the earth population if not more has perished by the end of the first half of the tribulation. With the defeat of the armies of the East and North, the Antichrist now focuses on his problem in Jerusalem.

The Middle of the Tribulation

27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate. Even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate." Daniel 9:27

The Two Witnesses



peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, Rev. 11:9

In Jerusalem, are two witnesses who are calling down God's judgments on the earth. (Revelation 11:1-12) They become the focal point of the calamities striking the planet in the first half of the tribulation. According to scripture, one of these men is Elijah, who the Jews, set a cup and a seat for at Passover. (Malachi 4:5) The world hates them and blames them for their problems. The armies of the Antichrist now invade Jerusalem, there the Two Witnesses are killed. And their dead bodies lay in the street of Jerusalem for 3 ½ days. The world by satellite and internet are able to view their dead bodies, the earth celebrates their death by exchanging gifts.

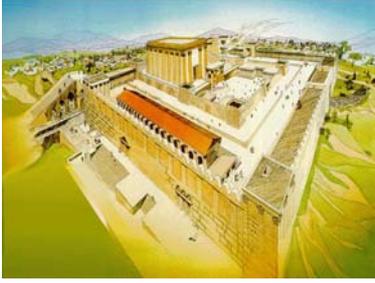
10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

11 Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they

stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. Revelation 11:10-11

After 3 ½ days, God calls his two witnesses up into heaven, in the view of all men, and earth then strikes Jerusalem killing 7,000 people and destroying a tenth of the city.

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Abomination of Desolation

During this middle part of the Tribulation, Satan loses his position in heaven to accuse the believers and is cast to earth (Revelation 12:7-12). He then incarnates the world leader, the Antichrist, who has invaded Jerusalem and stopped worship in the Jewish Temple. The Antichrist, now proclaims himself god, enters the Jewish Temple and demands the world and Israel worship him. Jesus warned those in Jerusalem, when they see him enter the Temple to flee into the mountains, for what follows is the Great tribulation. (2 Thessalonians 2;1-4)

15 "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),

16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

21 "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. Matthew 24:15-21

Israel escapes into the wilderness

Those in Jerusalem, who listen to the words of Jesus Christ, will flee into the mountains of Judah. When they see the Antichrist enter the Jewish Temple, and proclaim himself god, the event known as the Abomination of desolation has occurred, spoken of by both Daniel and Jesus. According to Zechariah, God will open a route of escape for those in Jerusalem, the Mt. of Olives will split into making a way for those in Jerusalem to escape. (Revelation 12:13-17)

1 Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, And your spoil will be divided in your midst.

2 For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, The houses rifled, And the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

3 Then the Lord will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle.

4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south.

5 Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Zechariah 14:1-5

There in the wilderness mountains of Judah, God supernaturally preserves a portion of Israel, one third (Zechariah 13;9), from the horrors about to occur on the earth. In hiding Israel wrestles with their Messiah, as Jacob wrestled with the angel. For the next 3.5 years, wrestles with the person of Jesus Christ, was he their Messiah? Is He their only hope? At the end of this period, Israel finally understand Jesus Christ, is their Messiah.

Antichrist & False prophet

The Antichrist now goes to war, against those failed to escape, the remnant. He pursues those who will not worship him. He sets up an image of himself in the Jewish Temple, demanding the world worship him. John describes a second person, another beast, with two horns like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon. This is the **false prophet**, who performs Satanic wonders (2 thes.2:9) for the world, who urges humanity to worship the Beast, the antichrist, by making an image of him. (Revelation 13:11-15)



Mark of the Beast

To make sure all are serious in their worship, the false prophet set up a system, an economic system, which will not allow anyone to buy or sell unless they receive the mark, **666**, on their forehead or right hand, pledging allegiance and worship to the Beast. Those who refuse are killed by beheading. (Revelation 13:16-18)

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The Last-half of the Tribulation



Worship of the Beast
Angels warn the earth
Bowl Judgments
Armageddon