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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

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## The Purpose For The Tribulation

Alice Childs 10/25/17

The notion of a coming Tribulation is a well-known concept, thanks in great part to the late Dr. Tim LaHaye’s and Jerry Jenkins’ Left Behind book series. Even those who aren’t familiar with the Bible or biblical prophecy know something about the coming Tribulation, even if all they know of it is the infamous Battle of Armageddon. However, what is much less well known even among believers is the reason for the Tribulation. Yet there is a reason for the Tribulation, and we as believers need to be able to answer and clarify the why of the coming time of God’s wrath. God is a God of order, reason, and design. He does nothing capriciously or without a plan and purpose. He is indeed working out His “Plan for the Ages,” and He is doing so with a definitive purpose and end goal in mind.

God, being omnipresent and omniscient, is not bound in TIME as we humans are; He is outside of the created construct of Time. God dwells in eternity; therefore, it is He who slices Time into infinitesimally small fragments of nanoseconds or stretches it out into millennia. The very construct of Time is the canvas on which God weaves the history of the world, from the very moment when Time began with God’s words, “Let there be...,” right up until the point when Time dissolves into what will become the “eternal now.” God is the author and finisher of it all. It is He who writes history past, history now, and history yet to come; therefore, all that He does is done with His plan and purpose in mind.

The entire Bible, both Old Testament and New, comprises the “whole counsel of God,” and the two testaments dovetail seamlessly together into a unified and complete whole with no contradictions or flaws — inerrant and infallible — when studied literally, historically, grammatically, and in proper context. This is important to keep in mind, because “rightly dividing” the Word of God is essential if we are to understand God’s “Plan for the Ages.” After all, we want to understand His agenda and not form our own by misapplying Scripture or taking His Word out of proper context.

If we are to understand what God is doing throughout history (which is really HIS STORY), then we need to move through Time to follow God’s ever progressing and ever more revealing plan throughout the ages. And what is the purpose of God’s overarching plan? Why, it is nothing less than the eternal redemption of fallen man through the sacrificial death, burial and victorious resurrection of God the Son, who paid the penalty of Sin that sin-cursed man could never pay. God revealed Himself and His plan through a race of people whom God Himself chose to work through — the nation of Israel. In fact, the entire Old Testament and part of the New (up until the birth of the Church at Pentecost after the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus in Acts chapter 2), is the telling and revealing God’s plan for the ages.

What we want to examine in this article is the purpose behind the Tribulation. Many people know what the Tribulation is, but very few believers can explain why the Tribulation is necessary to God's plan.

Let's begin in the book of Daniel, focusing this study on chapter 9, where we get a glimpse of God's purpose, order, and design. Although there is much information that still remains a mystery to us, God in His sovereign love has given to us in His Word a precise and astonishingly detailed outline of history, written in advance.

Daniel is one such book where history past, history now, and history future is converging headlong, fulfilling prophecies made and given to Daniel, a Jewish exile in Babylon nearly three millennia ago. This is why the study and understanding of biblical prophecy from both Testaments (the whole counsel of God) is so crucial to our being able to understand God's Word.

Biblical prophecy not only validates Scripture as authentic and "God-breathed," but it also helps us keep firmly in mind exactly when and to whom certain passages belong. This illumines for us God's differing plans for the different divisions of people groups within the timeline of the Bible.

For example, right after creation, humanity was all one vast people group. Later on, after the call of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Jacob's name was changed to ISRAEL. Thus God had chosen to separate for Himself one particular ethnic people through whom He would reveal Himself to all of humanity. It would be through the Jewish race (through the nation of Israel) that God would send His Son Jesus (God in human flesh) to be the Redeemer of all mankind.

Thus, with the calling and separating out from humanity as a whole — Abraham and his physical descendants — humanity was afterwards separated into two people groups: Jews (the physical descendants of Abraham) and Gentiles (all those who were non-Jews by birth). Both people groups God loves and died to save, but it was His chosen people, the Jews (Israel), through whom God chose to fulfill His redemptive plan.

This division continued until after the nation of Israel rejected Jesus as her Messiah by having Him crucified and rejecting the earthly kingdom He offered to them. Scripture is replete with God's dealings with national Israel through both conditional promises (the — if Israel will, then God would offer conditional promises specific to Israel) as well as certain unconditional covenants made between God and Abraham, along with Abraham's posterity — covenants that cannot be broken by God and which will be fulfilled down to the smallest detail in God's perfect timing and plan.

Even though Israel turned her back on Jesus as her Messiah, God has never turned His back on Israel. He has, for a time, put national Israel on the back burner, so to speak. Israel, as a nation, was scattered throughout the earth in the diaspora for almost 2,000 years (read in Matthew 24-25 of Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. and of the subsequent scattering of the Jews worldwide). Nonetheless, God has never cut all ties with Israel (read the entire book of Romans, in particular chapter 11).

When God temporarily set aside national Israel (after Calvary, His resurrection, and His ascension back to Heaven), He then made a third division into the great sea of humanity; He called forth a people out of both Jews and Gentiles into one new body — a body of believers in Christ alone as their Savior (1 Corinthians 14:1-4) in whom the Holy Spirit of God actually indwells and is eternally sealed (Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:22).

This new entity is, of course, the Church. Her function is to be God's witness on Earth as a body "called out" of the world. The Church's role in this dispensation (The Age of Grace) began with her birth at Pentecost (Acts chapter 2); it will end with her removal from the earth at the resurrection/rapture,

when Jesus comes to receive His Church (also called the body/bride of Christ) into the air just before the final seven years of fallen Earth's history (1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17; Romans 8:18-19; Philippians 3:20-21; John 14:3; Revelation 3:10; Revelation 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17; 1 Corinthians 15:50-54). This seven-year period of God's wrath is the same seven years recorded in Daniel chapter 9.

Once the Church is removed in the rapture, God's focus returns to national Israel in order to preserve from her a one-third remnant (Zechariah 13:8-9) to be brought through the coming Tribulation (more correctly known as "The Time of Jacob's Trouble" in Jeremiah 30:7) as through a "refining fire" in order to prepare Israel for the fulfillment of all of God's promises for her during the literal millennial reign of King Jesus on Earth.

This is the reason that the Church and Israel cannot be the same entity. The Church is not Israel, neither has the Church replaced Israel. Both are separate entities. Ever since the birth of the Church, there have been three divisions of humanity:

- (1) unbelieving JEWS
- (2) unbelieving GENTILES
- (3) the CHURCH (made up of both believing Jews and Gentiles — a new body "in Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:32).

The Church (made up of both believing Jews and Gentiles), will be removed before the beginning of the Tribulation because, during the Age (dispensation) of Grace, all who are willing to come to salvation have their sins judged at the cross, and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to each believer in Christ (Romans 4:22-25).

One purpose for the Tribulation is to judge and prepare a remnant of national Israel. After this time of testing, she will at last recognize, mourn, and believe in her true Messiah Jesus Christ, thus preparing her for the coming kingdom of Christ on Earth.

The second purpose for the Tribulation will be to destroy the rebellious unbelievers (both Jews and Gentiles) — those who have rejected Christ and who have "destroyed the earth" (Joel 3:2; Revelation 11:18).

In the book of Daniel in chapters 2, 7, and 9, we see how God revealed to Daniel incredibly precise and detailed prophecies concerning the times that He has appointed for the Jewish people. We learn that God has specific plans for the Hebrew people, and that His plans have spanned not just centuries, but millennia. We learn that God has appointed 490 years or 70 "weeks" of seven-year periods to accomplish His plans and purpose for the land of Israel and the Jewish people. We also learn that 483 of those 490 prophesied years have passed and have already been fulfilled — down to the very day that Jesus presented Himself to Israel as her Messiah whom she rejected. (69 "weeks" of 360-day lunar years constitutes 483 years).

As predicted in Daniel 9:26, the Messiah was indeed "cut off" — killed. This rejection of their Messiah by Israel stopped the further progression of the 70 "weeks" at 69 "weeks" (483 years), one "week" (seven years) short of the 70 "weeks" appointed to Israel.

After the removal of the Church in the rapture, God's focus will again return to Israel to finish the final "week" in order to:

- (1) judge the nation of Israel
- (2) finish their (Israel's) transgressions
- (3) make an end to their sins

- (4) rescue the remaining Jews from certain annihilation from the Antichrist (one third of whom God will bring through The Tribulation)
- (5) save the city of Jerusalem
- (6) bring all remaining Jews (the one third who become saved and who are preserved through the Tribulation) to believe in their true Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ (Daniel 9).

This last or 70th “week” will truly be “The Time of Jacob’s Trouble.” In the context of Daniel 9, the Jews are the focus of this prophecy. As we will see, the Church is always to be distinguished from Israel. Once the Church is removed, God’s focus will return to Israel. However, He is going to deal with all of sinful humanity as well. As great as God’s judgment will be (and the coming judgment will be beyond our ability to grasp), even in the midst of judgment God will still extend His great mercy. There will still be opportunities for the lost to come to Christ during the Tribulation, even after the rapture of the Church.

Those who come to Christ during this time will be a great number from every kindred, nation, tribe and tongue. There will be a great ingathering of souls into Heaven during this last seven years, yet sadly the vast majority of those who are saved during this time will be martyred for their faith. These future believers are not, however, part of the Church (the body/bride of Christ), because the Church will have already been in Heaven before these last seven years begin (Revelation chapters 4-5).

The ones who are saved during the Tribulation are known as Tribulation Saints, and as stated earlier, only a very few, relatively speaking, will make it through the entire seven years alive. The majority of them will die or be martyred during this time (Revelation 6:9-11 & 7:13-17).

This is why it is vital that all who are willing (both Jews and Gentiles) should come to Christ now, while there is yet time, to become a part of the body of Christ during this current Age of Grace; for the Church is not appointed to endure the coming wrath of God (1 Thessalonians 5:9; Revelation 3:10).

In summary of this most amazing chapter in one of the most amazing books of the entire Bible, I’d like to conclude by jumping ahead for just a bit to the New Testament book of Matthew, chapters 24-25. In this book, Jesus is addressing the very events that will take place during this 70th week.

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus was speaking to His disciples and was addressing Israel specifically. He was not addressing the Church at all in Matthew 24-25 or in the parallel passages in Mark 13:1-27 and Luke 21:5-28, which also record Jesus’ Olivet Discourse.

The Olivet Discourse given by Jesus to His disciples is recorded in Matthew 24-25. In this passage, Jesus gives a summation of events that lead up to, along with events that will occur during this final 70th “week.” Since the Olivet Discourse was written to the Jews, there are clear dispensational distinctives that must be kept in mind.

Although all Scripture is written for our edification in this Church Age, not all passages are written to the Church. We must keep in mind the three classes of people to whom the Word of God speaks:

- (1) The Jews
- (2) The Gentiles
- (3) the Church of Jesus Christ

“Give none offense neither to (1) the Jews (2) nor to the Gentiles (3) nor to the church of God” (1 Corinthians 10 :32).

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus is addressing the Jews, first with regards to the destruction of the

Temple, which occurred in 70 AD, and then later on in these passages to the Jews who will be living in “that day” — which is the entire seven-year period of the Time of Jacob’s Trouble (reference back to Daniel in chapter 9 where God, through the angel Gabriel, gave Daniel the prophecy of the 490 “weeks” of years that are to be appointed to “thy people” — “thy people” being Daniel’s people, the Jews).

There was no church in existence when this prophecy was given to Daniel, and would not be for several centuries. At the time that Daniel lived, there were only two classes of people: Jews and Gentiles. God gave Daniel specific and detailed prophecies regarding His plan for the ages for both the Jews, and in chapters 2 & 7 of the book of Daniel, for the Gentile world empires that had affected and would directly affect the nation of Israel.

The book of Daniel, specifically chapters 2 & 7, give God’s plans for the great Gentile empires from Daniel’s time onward, through to what is right now becoming the New World Order. These prophecies were given in astonishing detail and precision.

How do we know that Jesus was speaking to a still future Jewish audience in Matthew and in the parallel passages in Mark and Luke? For one thing, the Church was not even in existence until her birth at Pentecost (recorded in Acts chapter 2) after Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection, and ascension back to the Father. For another thing, Jesus’ message was to a Jewish audience concerning the time of the Tribulation – to prepare the yet to be believing remnant of ISRAEL for the Kingdom, which cannot occur on Earth until after the Time of Jacob’s Trouble has ended, when Jesus returns to earth to set up His literal Millennial kingdom in Jerusalem.

We must remember when studying the Bible to keep clear the distinctions between national Israel (the Jews), the Church, and the Gentiles (non-believing, non-Jewish peoples). Unbelieving Jews are just that — unbelieving Jews.

The New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were addressing Jews still living under the Dispensation of Law, since the new Dispensation of Grace under which we, the Church, are living right now had not yet begun.

This present Dispensation of Grace (in which the Church is made up of both believing Jews and Gentiles, now made one in Christ upon salvation) becomes the “body” of which Christ is the Head. The Church is also called the bride, of whom Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom.

This Dispensation of Grace will end at the resurrection of the “dead in Christ,” which occurs simultaneously with the rapture of all living saints. Those who are the Church both dead and alive, will be caught up to meet Jesus Christ in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-7). After this, God’s focus once again returns to national Israel to finish and fulfill all that is due Israel under those last seven years of the old Dispensation of Law.

The Jews will then have seven years (the last “week” of Daniel’s prophesied 70 weeks of years under the Dispensation of Law) to both finish and fulfill the entire 490 “weeks” of years the Lord purposed expressly for the Jews, according to Daniel in chapter 9.

This last period of seven years, The Time of Jacob’s (Israel’s) Trouble (Jeremiah 30:7) is also called THE Tribulation (to be distinguished from general tribulation which we all endure).

For insight into what events will be like and what things will occur to the Jews during this last seven years, read the 24th-25th chapters of Matthew, verses 9-51 of chapter 24 in particular. The Olivet Discourse recounts the same events as Daniel chapter 9 and is recounting events during that same

last seven years, and thus is specific to Israel and the Jews.

In contrast, the Church—Christ's Bride is "not appointed" to God's wrath. See in the verse below where the Apostle Paul is explicitly addressing the CHURCH.

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ"  
(1 Thessalonians 5:9).

We, the Church, are to always be looking forward to our "blessed hope" which is the Pre-Tribulation rapture spoken of in the books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians.

After the rapture of the Church, and throughout the final seven years of "The Time of Jacob's Trouble," God will preserve a remnant of national Israel. He will bring this Jewish remnant through the Tribulation (one third of them) so that by the end of that last seven years, "all of Israel" will be saved. That one-third remnant will have recognized Jesus as having always been their true Messiah; they will have acknowledged Him, accepted Him, and will have called out to their Messiah Jesus to rescue them.

This remnant of rescued and reborn Jews will follow their King into the kingdom in their mortal bodies (along with all surviving Gentile believers who will have come to salvation during the Tribulation, but after the rapture of the Church).

The remnant of Israel will at last receive all of the covenant blessings regarding the full land grant that the Lord made with their ancestor Abraham millennia ago. Thus, the purpose of God's Plan for the Ages will have been accomplished when He returns at His Second Coming to set up His earthly Kingdom.

So, what are God's ultimate goals for all of mankind, and what is the purpose for the Tribulation? In short they are these:

- 1) to bring an end to all sin and rebellion
- 2) to bring about the fulfillment of all of the covenant promises made by God to the Jewish people with regards to the land of Israel that God Himself covenanted to Abraham and his physical descendants
- 3) to eventually (at the end of the Millennium) deliver all of the redeemed of all the ages, along with everything else — accomplished and completed — to the Father for all eternity. At the end of the 1,000-year kingdom on this earth, eternity will then merge with Time; and the redeemed of all ages will live with God in His midst in an "eternal now."

The Church will have already been in Heaven in our redeemed and glorified bodies before the beginning of The Tribulation, thus the focus of God returns to Israel during these last seven years. Israel is the key to everything (Revelation 4:1).

The Church is "not appointed to wrath" (of God); however, that does not mean that the Church is now, or ever has been, spared persecution. The Church has always — since her beginning at Pentecost — suffered persecution in this world. She, as a whole, will continue to suffer persecution up until the instant the rapture occurs. However, persecution is not the same thing as the "wrath of God."

A clear distinction between Israel and the Church will clear up the confusion. "Rightly dividing" the Word of God also demonstrates the incredible precision dovetailing together both the Old and New Testaments.

Both Israel and the Church are precious to God, and both have equally important but differing roles to play in the outworking of God's great plan and purpose. We must learn to discern whose role is whose

in studying God's Word. In this manner, we are rightly dividing His Word. When we learn to do this, the meaning and context of the entirety of Scripture becomes clearer to us.

God bless you all, and let's keep studying the Word until Jesus calls us Home!  
Maranatha!

## Blockchain and biometrics: The tech disrupting banking

Anmar Frangoul | cNBC.com

As the banking industry changes at a rapid pace, one term is being used with increasing frequency — blockchain.

Put simply, blockchain refers to a tamper-proof, distributed digital ledger that records transactions.

Instead of different parties involved in a transaction keeping their own records of that transaction — which could potentially differ and cause confusion — blockchain creates one "master" record. This cannot be changed once a transaction has been recorded.

As technology giant IBM notes: "All parties must give consensus before a new transaction is added to the network."

Dirk Haubrich is head of consumer protection, financial innovation and payments at the European Banking Authority (EBA). He told CNBC: "We've looked at blockchain... in one particular use case, which was virtual currencies, four years ago."

At that time, the EBA had a "rather negative view," Haubrich explained. "But there are lots of other use cases that have been emerging since then, like trade finance and... clearing of payments."

This was "quite interesting," he added. "Many of the risks that we've identified at the time for virtual currencies probably don't arise for those use cases but we need to have a closer look, which we haven't done yet."

It could be argued that blockchain technology is still in its infancy, and that its potential is a long way from being fully realized.

PayPal's Mark Brant told CNBC that blockchain would continue to evolve, "but for it to become widely used there need to be scale use cases on either the consumer side or the merchant side or both."

"We'll continue to follow that and experiment with it and keep abreast of it, and continue to look to see whether there is a clear gap in the market that we can exploit with it," Brant, who is managing director at PayPal U.K., added.

While blockchain technology offers new ways of carrying out transactions, other innovations could help to boost the security of financial dealings.

One such development is the increasing use of biometrics in banking. Already, many of us use our fingerprints to unlock our smartphones, and there are a range of potential applications.

"There's voice biometrics, there's fingerprint biometrics, there's iris biometrics, I think there's going to be many more invented," Niall Cameron, global head of corporate and institutional digital at HSBC, said.

Cameron went on to say that biometrics was probably one of the most important areas of new technology needed by the industry.