

The First Half of the Tribulation Mark 13:5-13

By David DeWitt

Even though some form of these things happened throughout history, Jesus referred only to the global events that will take place during the future seven-year *tribulation* period that will precede His Second Coming. The word *you* (v. 5) refers to the disciples of Jesus who are alive during the time that the seven-year *tribulation* occurs.

Jesus told them eight things [with some explanations], which would happen in the first 3 ½ years of the great tribulation, what He called, *merely the beginning of birth pangs*. Keep in mind this is when the Antichrist, the head of a western 10 nation confederacy makes a peace treaty with a king of the north, east, south and Israel. But believers will be starved, imprisoned and beheaded because they do not take the mark of the beast.

1. Notice His introductory statement: *See to it that no one misleads you* (v. 5). A good warning for all time. Then He says: *Many [false teachers and false Messiahs] will come in My name, saying, 'I am He!' and will mislead many* (v. 6) [all those who do not take the Scripture literally will follow the antichrist].
2. Even though the antichrist is ruling, having made a peace treaty with the king of the north, east, south, and Israel [there will be] *wars and rumors of wars ... nation will rise up against nation* (vv. 7-8).
3. *There will be [natural disasters] earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines* (v. 8). Earthquakes and sink holes are increasing. Earthquakes are mentioned 7 times in Revelation and this reference is in all 3 Synoptic Gospels.
4. *They will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues* (v. 9). Although this might be any religious assembly, it could mean Jewish synagogues, probably indicating that the peace treaty between the Antichrist and Israel which begins Daniel's 70th seven includes the right for Jews to persecute Christians.
5. *You will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them* (v. 9). This is not about Paul before Felix or Festus but believers giving testimony to global officials during the tribulation, probably before they are executed.
6. *The gospel must first be preached to all the nations [by believers or an angel – Revelation 14:6] (v. 10).* Notice the gospel preached by the angel during the tribulation in Revelation 14:
 - *Rev. 14:6—And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people;*
 - *Rev. 14:7—and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."*
7. Family unity will be destroyed. *Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death* (v. 12).
8. *You will be hated by all because of My name* (v. 13). It is politically correct to publically honor any religion in the world today, except biblical Christianity.

How do we know Jesus is referring to the first half of the tribulation and not all of history?

Here are six observations:

1. He seems to be answering the question, *what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?* (v. 4). When they are fulfilled is not a long period of time.
2. At the end of verse 7, He said about wars and rumors of wars, *that is not yet the end*. This sounds like it is close to the end. But the wars through history were not part of an end of tribulation.
3. *The beginning of birth pangs* in verse 8 also sounds like the beginning of the end, not a historical 2000-year process.
4. *The gospel must first be preached to the nations* in verse 10 sounds like the end of the process of preaching the gospel, not an ongoing proclamation.
5. Verse 13, *the one who endures to the end, he will be saved* sounds like enduring to the end of a relatively short period of time. Enduring to the end, of Christian tribulation throughout history, never led to enduring to the end.
6. Specific warnings like verse 18, *pray that it may not happen in the winter*, does not sound like something that happens over many years.
7. The pivot point in this period is the *abomination of desolation* (v. 14) spoke by Daniel the prophet, which did not happen in history.