

The Mystery of the Church and other End Times Issues

This Bible study covers several related topics:

- **The mystery of the Church**
- **God's united people**
- **World evangelism**
- **The great tribulation**
- **The last trumpet**
- **Birth pains**
- **The Day of the Lord**
- **Sabbath rest**

Questions for reflection and discussion are provided at the end.

God's united people

So then, remember that once you physical Gentiles—called 'uncircumcision' by the so-called 'circumcision' (that made in flesh with hands) — that at that time you were apart from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have come to be near through the blood of the Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one and broken down the barrier of separation—the law with its commandments and ordinances — having abolished the enmity through His 'flesh', so as to mold the two [Jew and Gentile] into one new man in Himself (thus making peace), and to reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross (by which He killed the enmity). He came and

proclaimed peace to us, being both far and near, because through Him we both have access to the Father, by one Spirit. So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together to become a habitation of God in spirit. For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles — surely you have heard of the administration of the grace of God that was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the 'secret/mystery' (as I have written briefly already, with reference to which, when you read, you can understand my insight into Christ's secret/mystery), which in different generations was not made

known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles are joint-heirs, of the same body, and fellow partakers of His promise in the Christ through the Gospel, of which I became a servant according to the gift of God's grace, the gift given to me according to the outworking of His power. To me, the very least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all as to the program of the secret/mystery that from the beginning of the ages has been hidden by the God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms, according to the eternal purpose that He accomplished by Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have the boldness and the access with confidence through faith in Him.

Therefore I ask that you not lose heart at my afflictions on your behalf, which is your glory. - Ephesians 2:11-3:13

World evangelism

And because of the increase of the lawlessness the love of the majority will grow cold. So the one who perseveres to the end, he will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in the whole inhabited earth as a witness to all the ethnic nations, and then the end will come. - Matthew 24:12-14

Brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant of this 'mystery' (so that you not be conceited): hardening has come upon Israel in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, just as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn ungodliness away from Jacob; this is

my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.” - Romans 11:25-27

The great tribulation

"At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book." - Daniel 12:1

And pray that your flight may not happen in winter or on a Sabbath. Because then there will be a great tribulation, such as has never been since the beginning of the world until now, and never again will be. - Matthew 24:20,21

When they had evangelized that city and discipled a good number, they

returned to Lystra and Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God". - Acts 14:21,22

And one of the elders reacted, saying to me, "Who are these that are clothed in the white robes, and where did they come from?" So I said to him, "My lord, you know". So he said to me: "These are those who come out of the Great Tribulation — they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His sanctuary. And He who sits on the throne will shelter them." - Revelation 7:13-15

The last trumpet

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of the Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn—they will see the Son of the Man coming on the clouds of the heaven with power and great glory. And He will send out His angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they will collect His elect from the four winds, from one extreme of the heavens to the other." - Matthew 24:29-31

Now this I say, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither will deterioration inherit incorruptibility. And now, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a split second,

in an eye twinkle, at the last trumpet — the trumpet will blast and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. Because this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality. - 1 Corinthians 15:50-53

For this we say to you by a word of the Lord, that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will absolutely not precede those who have fallen asleep; because the Lord Himself — with a commanding shout, with the archangel's voice and with God's trumpet — will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are still alive, who are left, will be snatched up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air. In precisely this way we will always be with the Lord. So then, comfort one another with these words. - 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18

And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to the heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created the heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there would be no further delay, but in the days of the blast of the seventh angel, whenever he should trumpet, the mystery of God which was announced to His slaves the prophets would be finished. - Revelation 10:5-7

So the seventh angel trumpeted, and there were loud voices in heaven saying: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones in God’s presence, fell on their faces and worshipped God saying: “We thank You, O Lord God Almighty, He who is and who was and who is coming, because You have taken up your great

power and begun to reign. The nations were angry and your wrath came, even the time for the dead to be judged and to give the reward to Your slaves the prophets, and to the saints and those who fear your name, small and great, and to destroy those who have corrupted the earth.” And the temple of God in heaven was opened, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings and huge hail. - Revelation 11:15-19

Birth pains

For nation will be raised up against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in various places; but all these things are only a beginning of birth pains. - Matthew 24:7,8

The Day of the Lord

Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up — and it shall be brought low. - Isaiah 2:10-12

But the current heavens, and the earth, are being reserved by His word for fire, being preserved until the day of judgment and perdition of godless men. But dear ones, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not delaying the promise, as some consider delay, but rather is patient toward us, not wishing anyone to

perish but all to come into repentance. However, the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night, in which heavens will pass away with a whoosh, while the elements will be dissolved by burning — both the earth and the works in it will be completely consumed. Therefore, since all these things will be destroyed, what kind of people ought you to be in holy living and godliness, expecting and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which heavens, being on fire, will be dissolved, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? - 2 Peter 3:7-12

I, John, your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Christ Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the Word of God and on account of the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in spirit on the Day of the Lord, and I heard a voice behind me, loud as a trumpet, saying, "Write what you see

in a book and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia and to Laodicea." -

Revelation 1:9-11

Sabbath rest

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. - Genesis 2:1-3

Therefore we should fear, since a promise of entering His rest still stands, lest any one of you should expect to have come short of it. Really, because we are continually hearing Good News just like they did, but the

word that they heard did not profit them, since they were not intimately united with the faith of those who obeyed. Now we who have believed do enter that rest, just as He has said, "So I took an oath in my wrath, 'As if they will ever enter my rest!'" — His works were certainly finished from the foundation of the world, because somewhere He has spoken about the seventh day like this, "And on the seventh day God rested from all His works", while again, in this place, "As if they will ever enter my rest!" Therefore since it remains for some to enter into it, and those who formerly had the Good News proclaimed to them did not enter because of disobedience, He again designates a certain day, after such a long time, saying through David: "Today" (as was stated above), "Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." Because if Jesus had given them rest, He would not have spoken afterward of another day. So then,

there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. Further, the one having entered into His rest has himself also rested from his own works, just as God did from His. - Hebrews 4:1-10

Questions

- 1. If the Jews and Gentiles have been reconciled into one body through the cross of Jesus Christ, why would anyone think that both Jews and Gentiles would not go through the final 42 months of tribulation and purification together?**
- 2. If the time tribulation and purification is like the birth pains of a woman in labor, why would anyone assume that he or she can have a Cesarean section delivery rather than a full labor delivery?**

- 3. Does it matter if God's people – both Jews and Gentiles – go through the final 42 months of tribulation and purification in terms of expectations and mental attitude and preparation?**
- 4. Is there any Bible verse that explicitly defines the length of time of the “great tribulation”?**
- 5. Is the “great tribulation” the same as the final 42-month period of tribulation and purification? Or is it possible that God purposely did not define its length of time?**
- 6. Is it possible that the great tribulation has already started?**
- 7. Is the mystery of the Church related to the mystery of the rapture?**

- 8. Is the rapture of the Church the same as the resurrection of the righteous?**

- 9. Is the trumpet mentioned in Matthew 24:31 the same as the ones mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Revelation 10:7, and Revelation 11:15?**

- 10. According to the Joshua Project, there are still around 2,000 distinct groups of people who have not heard the Gospel of Jesus. If the end will not come until they are all reached, who will reach them – Gentiles or Jews or both?**

- 11. Is the Day of the Lord the same as the return of the Lord? Or does the Day of the Lord include a longer period of time?**

- 12. If one day is like 1000 years, and God blessed and sanctified the seventh day, should we expect His Son to return at the beginning of the seventh 1000-year period?**

- 13. If the Lord Jesus began His ministry around 27AD, should we expect Him to return 2,000 years later – around 2027AD?**

- 14. What do you think it would take to motivate Christians to complete the evangelization of the world in only a few years time?**

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written in it, because the time is near. -

Revelation 1:3

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." - Revelation 19:10