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**A0537 – September 11, 2005 – Revelation - The Birth Pangs Of The Messiah**

Before we enter in on the Tribulation there are several Tribulation Terms used throughout the Bible. These terms describe the Tribulation either in part or in whole. To help you understand the Tribulation we're going to define these various terms. Today we will evaluate three Tribulation Terms used in the Bible and the span of time they refer to: 1) "The Time of Jacob's Trouble", 2) "The Great Tribulation", and 3) the "Birth Pangs". Next week we will evaluate the term "The Day of the Lord" and other terms related to it such as "that day", "the great day", etc...

The Tribulation (7 years)

Birth Pangs/Messianic Woes! (7 years)

Labor (first 3 ½ years)      Hard Labor (last 3 ½ years)  
(7 years)

The Time of Jacob's Trouble (last 3 ½ years)

The Great Tribulation (last 3 ½ years)

The Day of the Lord (1007 years)

Broad (1007 years)      Narrow (1 day)  
Dark (7 year) + Light (1000 years)

**I.    BIRTH PANGS/MESSIANIC WOES**

**A.    Birth Pangs in Judaism**

Ancient Judaism believed that a 7-year period of time would immediately precede the Messiah's coming to rule the world. The Babylonian Talmud states, "Our Rabbis taught: In the seven-year cycle at the end of which the son of David will come...at the conclusion of the septennate the son of David will come."i Patai said, "the idea became entrenched that the coming of the Messiah will be preceded by greatly increased suffering...This will last seven years. And then, unexpectedly, the Messiah will come." The Dead Sea Scrolls

called the severe troubles of the seven years before the Messiah's coming "the birth pangs of the Messiah." Some of the Rabbi's translated 'the birth pangs of the Messiah' more briefly as 'the Messianic Woes'. Why did they call this seven year period 'the birth pangs of the Messiah'? Because travail precedes birth, and this travail "precedes the birth of a new era"—the Messianic Age. Just as a woman must go through a period of agony before her child is born into the world, so the world must go through birth pangs before the Messianic Age is born into the world.

The pangs of the Messianic times are imagined as having heavenly as well as earthly sources and expressions, From Above, awesome cosmic cataclysms will be visited upon the earth: conflagrations, pestilence, famine, earthquakes, hail and snow, thunder and lightning. These will be paralleled by evils brought by men upon themselves: insolence, robbery, heresy, harlotry, corruption, oppression, cruel edicts, lack of truth, and no fear of sin. All this will lead to internal decay, demoralization, and even apostasy. Things will come to such a head that people will despair of Redemption. This will last seven years. And then, unexpectedly, the Messiah will come.

These are the extreme measures that the world and Israel will have to experience before Israel will turn to Jesus as Messiah, announcing, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matt 23:39).

Rabbinic response to 'the birth pangs of the Messiah' varied. Because of the unparalleled suffering some wished not to be alive when the Messiah comes. For example, one Rabbi said, "Let him come, but let me not see him". Other Rabbi's taught that if one engaged in intense study of the Torah and continual good deeds he would be spared from the birth pangs of the Messiah. Needless to say, Jews wished to somehow avoid this intense time of labor.

## **B. Birth Pangs in the Bible**

In the OT, the "birth pangs" are a common metaphor for God's purposed judgment, wrath, and fierce anger on certain nations or cities (God is the source - Job 21:17; Israel and Jerusalem - Isa 26:17-18; Jer 4:31; 6:24; 13:21; Hos 13:12-13; Mic 4:9-10; Babylon - Isa 13:8; Jer 50:43; Damascus - Jer 49:24; Moab - Jer 48:41; Edom - Jer 49:22; Ninevah - Nah 2:10). These are sometimes translated into English by the words "sorrows" and "distress". To distribute His purposed wrath God often uses other warring nations.

In the NT, the word “birth pangs” is *hodin* and is used four times in the NT. Three of these uses are in connection with the Tribulation (Matt 24:8; Mark 13:8; 1 Thess 5:3) and one use stands in connection with the agonies accompanying Christ’s physical death (Acts 2:24). When the word is metaphorically used of the Tribulation it always refers to the period immediately preceding the advent of the Messiah and as a time of distress, great sufferings, and anguish.

The birth pangs, as described in the Bible are “recurring spasms of pain which are not subject to conscious control, during which the woman in labor writhes—a process that can be accompanied by a sense of fear or anxiety, screams, and groans.” The Scriptures constantly compare a woman’s pains at childbirth to the tribulation judgments God brings upon the world. Sometimes, the Hebrew word for birth pangs is translated “distress” or “sorrows”. It always describes a time of God’s intense displeasure and wrath. In the OT the birth pangs of the Messiah are associated with the future time of Jacob’s trouble (Jer 30:6-7).<sup>ii</sup>

### 1. Time of Jacob’s Distress

**Jeremiah 30:6-7** 'Ask now, and see If a male can give birth. Why do I see every man *With* his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And *why* have all faces turned pale? <sup>7</sup> 'Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's distress, But he will be saved from it.

These verses vividly portray the time of Jacob’s distress as “a woman in childbirth”. Verse 7 says “that day is great, There is none like it;” Importantly, Matt 24:21 describes the great tribulation as a period unlike any other period of tribulation the world has or ever will know.

**Matthew 24:21** "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.

Thus, since there can be only one time of unparalleled trouble then “the time of Jacob’s distress” and the “great tribulation” must cover the same time period.

But when is this period? How many years does it cover? The Great Tribulation will begin in the middle of the seven-year Tribulation. We know this because Jesus indicated that the Great Tribulation would begin with the abomination of desolation (Matt 24:15-21) which will take place in the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel.

**Daniel 9:27** in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate,

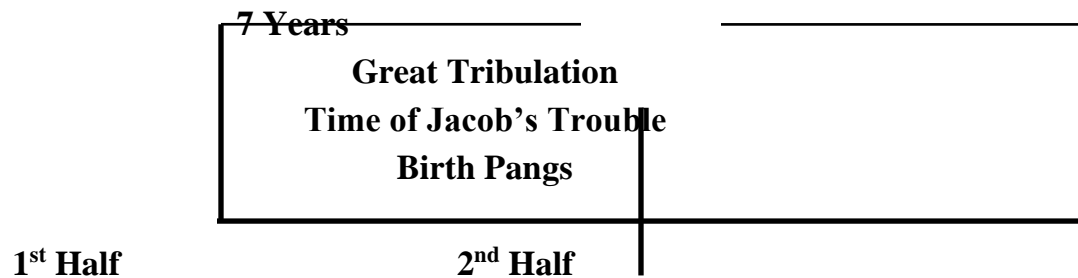
When will the Great Tribulation end? The Great Tribulation will end at the close of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel since Jesus said, His coming will take place “immediately after” the great tribulation (Matt 24:29-31).

Since the “birth pangs” are associated with the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jer 30:6-7) and the time of Jacob’s trouble covers the same period of time as the Great Tribulation (Matt 24:21) then we can conclude several things:

1. The time of Jacob’s Trouble and the Great Tribulation cover the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation
2. The birth pangs cover at least the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation

### 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel 9

#### Last 3 ½ Years



But when do the “birth pangs” begin?

## 2. Beginning of the Birth Pangs

In Matthew 24:8 Jesus says “these are merely the beginning of birth pangs” signifying that the five of the first six seal judgments are included in the birth pangs. The fifth seal judgment is not a judgment *per se* but a picture of those who had been martyred.

1. false messiahs (Matt 24:5; Luke 21:8)
2. war (Matt 24:6-7; Luke 21:9-10)
3. famines (Matt 24:7; Luke 21:11)
4. death (Luke 21:11)
- 5.

6. earthquakes and signs in the heavens (Matt 24:7; Luke 21:11)

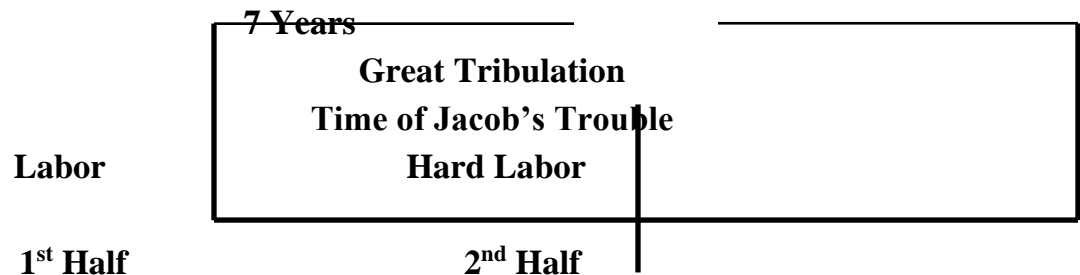
Thus, the “beginning of birth pangs” are not the hard labor pangs but the less severe birth pangs. These “birth pangs” take place before the abomination of desolation which takes place at the middle of the Tribulation (Matt 24:15; Dan 9:27). Therefore, we can conclude that the “birth pangs” start at the beginning of the Tribulation with the breaking of the 1st Seal judgment. When do they end? Since they are associated with the “day of Jacob’s distress” which does not end until the close of the great tribulation then the birth pangs last until the end of the great tribulation lasting a total of seven full years (of 360 days each).

**C. Two Divisions of Birth Pangs**

We can go further and say that the “birth pangs” can be divided into two sections.

1. labor
2. hard labor

**70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel 9**  
**2 Divisions of Birth Pangs**



Just as a woman begins to give childbirth the less severe birth pangs precede the later more severe pangs of hard labor, so the world will undergo 3 ½ years of less severe pangs followed by 3 ½ years of severe pangs of labor before the world can give birth to the Messianic Age.

Dispensationalism is a cataclysmic worldview. We believe that the major changes in world history have come and will come by global cataclysmic events (e.g. the Noahic Flood). For those devoted to world peace we can sympathize. For the Christian world peace is inevitable but the world seeks peace on its own terms. For example, our own nation has implemented the 3 Stage ROADMAP to Peace in the Middle East, involving the two-state solution. This ill devised plan will not work. It may bring a temporary peace but it will not

bring about a lasting peace in the Middle East. Negotiations will never bring peace to the Middle East much less to the whole world. A great cataclysm must take place, we know it as the Tribulation, divided into two periods of birth pangs; the less severe pangs during the first 3 ½ years and the severe pangs during the last 3 ½ years, aka the Great Tribulation and the Time of Jacob's Trouble. When these have run their course the world will give birth to the Messianic Age, the age of peace on earth. The bottom line is even an infinite amount of negotiations to establish peace is doomed to failure.

**Zechariah 9:10** And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.

Until Messiah returns lasting world peace cannot exist. Man does not have it in him to produce peace.

To repeat, just as a woman must endure birth pangs to overcome that which hinders her baby from coming into the world, so the world will have to endure birth pangs to overcome that which will hinder its future Messianic Age from coming into being. Thus, the birth pangs of the seven years (the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel 9) before the Messiah's coming to reign are absolutely necessary to remove Satan and rebellious mankind and their rule of the world system from the earth so that the Messianic Age can be born".

Thus, Dispensationalism, as you can see, is a cataclysmic worldview. The world must go through an intense time of anguish before the Messiah returns to establish world peace.

#### **D. Birth Pangs and the Day of the Lord**

Next week we will deal specifically with the advanced concept of the Day of the Lord. This week, suffice it to say that the birth pangs are associated with the Day of the Lord in the OT. For example,

**Isaiah 13:6-13** Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. <sup>7</sup> Therefore all hands will fall limp, And every man's heart will melt. <sup>8</sup> They will be terrified, Pains and anguish will take hold of them; They will writhe like a woman in labor, They will look at one another in astonishment, Their faces aflame. <sup>9</sup> Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. <sup>10</sup> For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light. <sup>11</sup>

Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.  
<sup>12</sup> I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold And mankind than the gold of Ophir. <sup>13</sup> Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the LORD of hosts In the day of His burning anger.

And in the NT. For example,

**1 Thessalonians 5:1-3** Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. <sup>2</sup> For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

Next week we will develop the Day of the Lord concept. For today, we have concluded the following:

- In the Bible, birth pangs are associated with God's purposed judgment, wrath, and fierce anger against the wicked
- The divine judgment, wrath, and fierce anger associated with birth pangs often comes through human or angelic instruments
- Both the Bible and ancient Judaism teach that the last seven years before the Messiah comes to reign on the earth will be characterized by severe birth pangs. The Bible indicates these seven years are the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel 9.
- The Bible indicates that the Great Tribulation and the Time of Jacob's Trouble are an unparalleled time of calamity and that they cover the second half of the seven years preceding the Messiah's second advent.
- The Bible also reveals that the second half of the seven years covered by the Great Tribulation and the Time of Jacob's Trouble are associated with the birth pangs, particularly the severe birth pangs of hard labor.
- The Bible indicates that the seven years before the Messiah's advent to reign will be divided into two divisions of birth pangs. The first division will cover the first half of the seven years and will be less severe. The second division will cover the second half of the seven years and will be more severe, hard labor birth pangs.
- The Bible demonstrates that the beginning of birth pangs and the first six seals are the same thing. Thus, the first six seals correspond to the first half of the seven years.
- Both the Bible and ancient Judaism teach that the world must go through the seven years of birth pangs in order for the Messianic Age to be born into the world. The Bible indicates that these birth pangs are absolutely necessary to remove Satan, those aligned with him, and their rule over the world system from the earth so that the Messianic Age can come.
- The Bible teaches that birth pangs are associated with the Day of the Lord.

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<sup>i</sup> All quotes come from Renald Showers, *Maranatha: Our Lord Come!* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 2001), pp 21-29.

<sup>ii</sup> **Jeremiah 30:6-7** 'Ask now, and see If a male can give birth. Why do I see every man *With* his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And *why* have all faces turned pale? <sup>7</sup> 'Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's distress, But he will be saved from it.

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