

A Time of Trouble for Jacob

Matthew 24:9-28 and Mark 13:14-23

Late in the afternoon on Wednesday the thirteenth of Nisan

In preparation for answering the talmidim's second question: **What will be the sign that the messianic Kingdom will be set up**, Christ gave a **far eschatological prophecy** about the Great Tribulation. There are many names for the time of trouble for Jacob (see my commentary on **Revelation Cg - The Great Tribulation**), including the **70th week** of Daniel (see my commentary on **Revelation Ch - The Beginning of the Great Tribulation**).

The fact that there would be a time of turmoil just before the coming of **Jesus** is well documented both in the TaNaKh as well as the Talmudic commentaries. Among the many passages in the Hebrew Scriptures that describe this turbulent time, the weeping prophet offers perhaps the most concise summary: **These are the words ADONAI spoke concerning Israel and Judah. This is what the LORD says: Cries of fear are heard - terror, not peace. Ask and see. Can a man bear children? Then why do I see every strong man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor, every face turned deathly pale? How awful that day will be! No other will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but all Isra'el will be saved (Jeremiah 30:4-7 and Romans 11:26a).**

The rabbis noted that the prophet is predicting a unique time in Jewish history. It is said to be a time of trouble for **Jacob** (*tzarah hee l'Yaakov*) that at first glance may not seem so unusual. **Isra'el** has known plenty of *tzuris* (Yiddish for troubles) in its tumultuous history! But this is said to be a time like no other in history. **The rabbis teach that before the day of Messiah, there must come a time of extreme darkness and tribulation.**

So unique is this description by Jeremiah that the rabbis titled those days "the birth pains of the Messiah (Tractate Sanhedrin 98b; Tractate Ketuvot 111a). In this graphic description, the events immediately preceding the coming of **Meshiach** will be reminiscent of a **woman in her final days of labor**. **The birth pains** become more intense as well as closer together before that moment of new birth (see my commentary on **Revelation Bg - The Sequence of Pretribulational Events**). So, too, will it be with the world events just prior to **Christ's** arrival. It will be an increasingly intense time but will culminate with the glorious birth of the messianic Kingdom.¹³³⁰