



Daniel 12:1–3 (ESV)

The Time of the End

12 “At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.³ And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

The Great Tribulation

Before I get in my car to take a trip, I check the weather report, especially if it's already snowing. If I hear that the driving is bad, then I usually plan on making the trip on a different day.

Sometimes we know trouble is ahead, but we choose to go right into the middle of the trouble. What we want to do matters more to us than the difficulty we will face. That is exactly what happens when we attempt to study the Great Tribulation. Let's see what the Bible tells us.

In this lesson we will study:

- What does the Bible teach about the Great Tribulation?
- When will the Great Tribulation take place?
- What difference does it make now that we know about it?

What does the Bible teach about the Great Tribulation?

The Bible uses the phrase “the Great Tribulation” in only two places: Revelation 2:22 and Revelation 7:14. That doesn’t mean that the Bible doesn’t refer to the events of the “Great Tribulation” in other passages. Since the phrase is used in those two places, that seems like a good place to start. We cannot doubt that the Bible is telling us about the Great Tribulation when it uses those exact words.

Revelation 2:22 – These are Jesus' words to the church in Thyatira, at the beginning of the book of Revelation, when Jesus gives a message to the seven churches: Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7), Smyrna (Revelation 2:9-11), Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17), Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29), Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6), Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13), and Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22).

Here is what Jesus says to the church at Thyatira. I will comment on the parts I underline.

¹⁹ “I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. ²⁰ But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. ²¹ I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. ²² Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works,²³ and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. ²⁴ But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. ²⁵ Only hold fast what you have until I come. ²⁶ The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, ²⁷ and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. ²⁸ And I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’¹

What's happening at the church in Thyatira? It's a mix of good and bad. They have shown "love", "faith", "service", and "patient endurance" (Revelation 2:19). However, only some of the people are doing these good things. Other members of the congregation are doing what is bad. They have a person, whom Jesus calls "Jezebel", who is teaching what is false. The problem is that the leadership of the church tolerates this false teaching. The effect on the congregation, from Jesus' point of view, will require her punishment. She is leading other members of the congregation to commit sins of "sexual immorality" and to "eat food sacrificed to idols" (Revelation 2:20). Jesus gave her time to repent (Revelation 2:21). But now the time for repentance has passed. Jesus says that He is going to "throw her onto a sickbed" (Revelation 2:22). The NIV says that Jesus will "cast" Jezebel "on a bed of suffering" (Revelation 2:22). What about those who follow her false teaching, and act on it? Jesus will also "throw" them "into great tribulation unless they repent of her works" (Revelation 2:22). He will "strike her children dead" (Revelation 2:23).

Did you notice that the "great tribulation" mentioned in Revelation 2:22 is sent by Jesus to punish those in church of Thyatira who do not repent of their false teaching and sinful behavior? In this passage, then, "great tribulation" refers to punishment sent by Jesus Christ on those who fill the fellowship of believers with false teaching and sinful behavior. The fellowship of believers should be pure and holy. What Jesus is doing will ensure their purity.

The phrase "**the great tribulation**" is also used in Revelation 7:14. This passage is from much later in the book of Revelation. Let's take a look:

¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

¹⁵ "Therefore they are before the throne of God,
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

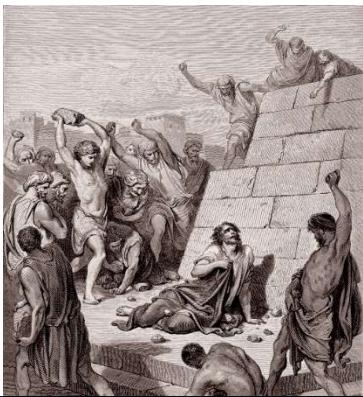
¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;
the sun shall not strike them,
nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."²

John sees a great multitude before the throne of God and the lamb (Revelation 7:9). An "elder" asks John to identify who the people "clothed in white robes". He asks, "from where have they come?" John answers, "Sir, you know" (Revelation 7:14). The elder tells him, "These are the ones coming out of **the great tribulation**." He goes on to explain why their robes are white, "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Re 2:19–29). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Re 7:13–17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.



In Acts 7 Stephen was stoned to death for proclaiming the Gospel.

(Revelation 7:14). John tells us that the elder explains that they serve God “day and night in his temple” and that God “will shelter them with his presence” (Revelation 7:15). “They shall hunger no more” (Revelation 7:16). “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 7:17).

The “**great tribulation**” in this passage is not sent by Jesus, as in the first passage. This time the “**great tribulation**” describes a time when believers are persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Let’s look at this passage for some answers. When does this occur? To be honest we aren’t told. We might think that it is talking about the very last days, immediately before Jesus returns. It certainly includes that period of time. However, it might also include the period of time when John was writing down what Jesus showed him while he was on the island of Patmos. Let me explain why it might include the time

that John was writing these words. The book of Revelation is addressed to the seven churches mentioned at the beginning of the book. They were facing intense persecution. These words would have given believers in those churches courage to persevere. John knew that if they could just hold on to their faith in Christ, and remain righteous before God, they would receive a great reward: “God would wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 7:17). We could speak of **tribulation** as beginning with the suffering of Christ on the cross and continuing with those who are in Christ, until the time of His return. The time of **tribulation** may include that very, long period of time. In the next section of this study, I’ll show you a very good reason to think the **great tribulation** probably refers to that entire period of time. Of course, at the very end, just before Christ returns, things will get far, far worse (Daniel 12:1).

We should remember that Jesus told the church in Thyatira that He would send “great tribulation” if they forgot the truth about the Gospel and righteousness. Even though the “great tribulation” was not a persecution for their faith, they still needed to persevere in their love and devotion to Jesus Christ and His righteousness.

When will the Great Tribulation take place?

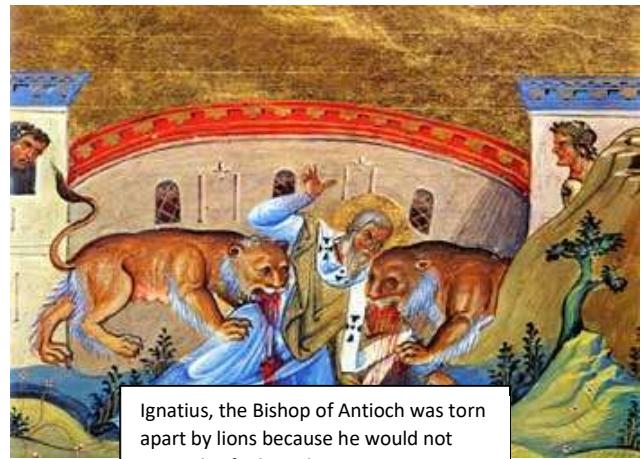
Most Christians today believe the **Great Tribulation** is a future event. The problem with that understanding is that some Christians get the idea that they can relax a little. They think that if it was the time of the “**great tribulation**” then it would be important to stay close to God. But, if it is far away then they don’t need to worry about it now. But what does the Bible say about the time of the **Great Tribulation**?

There are so many passages about the **Great Tribulation** that I can’t cover all of them here. My greatest concern is that some Christians think we can relax because the **Great Tribulation** is something that will take place in the future. One important passage in determining the time of the **Great Tribulation** is a passage that doesn’t use the phrase “great tribulation,” but clearly refers to it.

1 John 2:18–21 (ESV)

Warning Concerning Antichrists

¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. ²⁰ But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. ²¹ I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.



Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch was torn apart by lions because he would not recant his faith in Christ, in AD 107.

John is writing to Christians who are facing a problem within their congregations. False teachers, who used to be part of their fellowship, left them and struck out on their own. They claimed to be followers of Jesus Christ, but they

were not. In fact, John called them “antichrists” because they were doing the bidding of the great “Antichrist” who is “coming.” This means that there will come a time when the Antichrist will make a physical appearance in the world, just before Jesus returns. But the influence of the Antichrist and the tribulation had already begun when John wrote these words.

A time of more intense persecution is coming, but even in John’s day, the **Great Tribulation** had begun. It would get much worse in the very last days. But the “last days” had already begun even when John was still alive. John says, “it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18).

Let’s also take a look at 1 John 3:7-12 and Romans 12:17-20 & 26. We will compare those verses with verses found at the beginning of Genesis. I will put the verses in two columns to help you see the repeated words.

1 John 3:7-12	Genesis
1 John 3:7–12 (ESV)	Genesis 3:13 (ESV)
⁷ Little children, <u>let no one deceive you</u> . Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸ Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for <u>the devil has been sinning from the beginning</u> . The reason the Son of God appeared was to <u>destroy the works of the devil</u> .	¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent <u>deceived me</u> , and I ate.”
⁹ No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for <u>God’s seed</u> abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.	Genesis 3:15 (ESV)
¹⁰ By this it is evident who are the <u>children of God</u> , and who are the <u>children of the devil</u> : whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.	¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between <u>your offspring</u> and <u>her offspring</u> ; he shall <u>bruise your head</u> , and you shall bruise his heel.”
Love One Another	Genesis 4:1–15 (ESV)
¹¹ For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹² We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and <u>murdered</u> his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous.	Cain and Abel
Romans 16:17–20 (ESV)	4 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.” ² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. ³ In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶ The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.”
Final Instructions and Greetings	⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” ¹⁰ And the LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. ¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” ¹³ Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. ¹⁴ Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” ¹⁵ Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.
¹⁷ I appeal to you, brothers, to <u>watch out</u> for those who <u>cause divisions</u> and <u>create obstacles contrary to the doctrine</u> that you have been taught; avoid them. ¹⁸ For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by <u>smooth talk</u> and flattery they <u>deceive</u> the hearts of the <u>naive</u> . ¹⁹ For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. ²⁰ The God of peace will soon <u>crush Satan under your feet</u> . The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.	Genesis 3:13 (ESV)
	¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent <u>deceived me</u> , and I ate.”
	Genesis 3:15 (ESV)
	¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between <u>your offspring</u> and <u>her offspring</u> ; he shall <u>bruise your head</u> , and you shall bruise his heel.”

The original “faith community” was in the Garden of Eden, at the beginning of the creation. But the community of believers need to recognize that they need to do what the original “faith community” failed to do. They need to “watch out” (Romans 16:17) for those who would “deceive the hearts of the naïve” (Romans 16:18). If believers remain faithful God will “crush Satan” under their feet (Romans 16:20). This is a fulfillment of the prophecy that the “offspring” of Eve would “bruise” or crush, the head of the serpent’s “offspring” (Genesis 3:15). Eve was “deceived” by the serpent (Genesis 3:13). The Christians Paul wrote to in Rome needed to be on the alert and avoid the deception Satan intended for them.

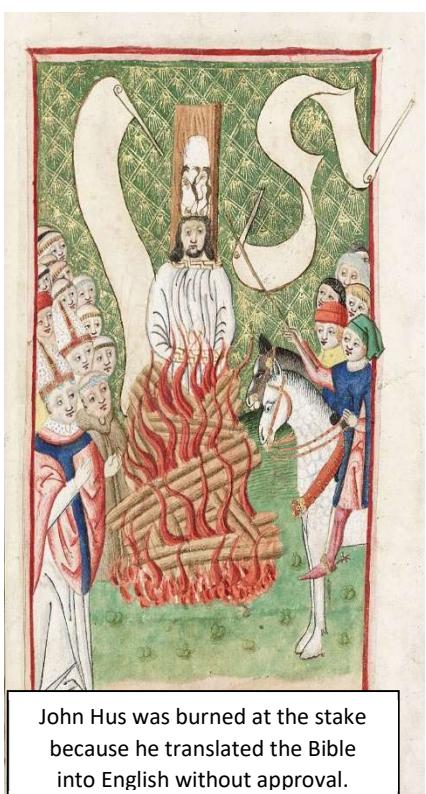
In his first letter, the Apostle John wrote to Christians. He urged them to not be deceived (1 John 3:7), as Eve had been “deceived” (Genesis 3:13). This was something Satan had done from the very beginning. He had not stopped. Jesus came so that He might “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). John goes on to say that those who are truly saved will not continue in a pattern of sinfulness, because “God’s seed” abides in them (1 John 3:9). Those who are “children of the devil” will continue in sin. But those who are “children of God” will do what is righteous (1 John 3:10).

Taking into account the connection between Tribulation and the temptation of Adam and Eve, we need to recognize that **tribulation** is a test of our faith. The purpose of tribulation is to purify the church, and the believers in the church. We might prefer to avoid tribulation, but it really isn’t a choice for us.

If we choose to view tribulation as simply a bad experience we want to avoid, then we may choose to reject our faith in Christ to avoid conflict, and the tribulation that comes with believing and obeying Christ in the midst of a sinful world.

What difference does it make now that we know about it?

Now you know that there will be times when the forces of evil in this world will do everything they can to convince you to turn away from faith in Jesus Christ. They may convince you that sin is okay, and it really doesn’t matter if you sin. But remember the words of Jesus, He will send tribulation to those who practice sin without repentance (Revelation 2:22). Maybe you don’t like to be threatened by Jesus Christ. I hope you don’t.



But if you, as a believer in Jesus Christ, don’t like it here is what you can do about it: Believe Him. Trust Him. Obey Him.

Jesus isn’t going to avoid shocking you into obedience. It is for your benefit, if you do as He asks. You will receive the reward Jesus Christ has earned for you, eternal life, free of tears (Revelation 7:17). The hardships of this world will pass away. These are the eternal blessings of new life in Christ.

While it is true that there will come a time of a greater hardship than what has ever been known (Daniel 12:1), everyone who believes in the true God will suffer tribulation. But there have been periods of tribulation ever since Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross.

The greatest danger of tribulation is not that it will hurt. The greatest danger is that you might give up, throw in the towel, and cast aside all the blessings that Jesus Christ will give you if you remain faithful to Him. So, persevere. Stay true to Christ.

The Time of the End (Daniel 12:1–13)

“At that **time** shall arise **Michael**, the **great prince** who has **charge** of your **people**. And **there** shall be a **time** of trouble, such as never has been since **there** was a nation till that **time**. But at that **time** your **people** shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the **book**. And **many** of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, **some** to **everlasting** life, and **some** to shame and **everlasting** contempt. And those who are **wise** shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn **many** to righteousness, like the stars **forever** and ever. But you, **Daniel**, shut up the **words** and seal the **book**, until the **time** of the end. **Many** shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” Then I, **Daniel**, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this **bank** of the **stream** and one on that **bank** of the **stream**. And someone said to the man clothed in **linen**, who was above the **waters** of the **stream**, “How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?” And I heard the man clothed in **linen**, who was above the **waters** of the **stream**; he raised his right **hand** and his left **hand** toward heaven and swore by him who lives **forever** that it would be for a **time**, **times**, and half a **time**, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy **people** comes to an end all these **things** would be finished. I heard, but I did not **understand**. Then I said, “O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these **things**?” He said, “Go your way, **Daniel**, for the **words** are **shut** up and **sealed** until the **time** of the end. **Many** shall purify themselves and **make** themselves white and be refined, but the **wicked** shall act **wickedly**. And none of the **wicked** shall **understand**, but those who are **wise** shall **understand**. And from the **time** that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that **makes** desolate is set up, **there** shall be 1,290 **days**. Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 **days**. But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the **days**.”

(ESV)

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Tribulation's Twisting and Churning

Tribulation is a type of chaos

The flood of Noah's time – the flood was a tribulation, and Noah and family endured it. They also endured ridicule while they built the ark.

The plagues in Egypt sent by God came just before the Israelites were set free from slavery, and were free to leave to begin a new creation in the Promised Land (cf. [Gen. 13:10](#); [Deut. 8:7–10](#); [11:8–17](#)) where the Promised Land is described using words similarly used to describe the Garden of Eden).

The people of Israel being taken into captivity in Babylon before God started a new covenant with His people (see [Isa. 45:18–19](#); [Jer. 4:23–28](#)). Israel will become like a new Eden ([Isa. 51:3](#); [Ezek. 36:35](#); [Joel 2:3](#); cf. [Isa. 65:21–23](#) LXX).

One Great Tribulation

The Great Tribulation is different because it is the final assault and test of Jesus and the church, which will culminate in His final return.

[Daniel 12:1](#) – the final phase of the tribulation will be worse than any that came before it.

[Daniel 12:1](#) is cited in several New Testament prophecies about the Great Tribulation - [Dan. 12:1](#) in [Matt. 24:21](#); [Rev. 2:22](#); [7:14](#),

AD 70 destruction of the Temple

The church age, as a whole

The beginning and end of the church age

A greater clash between God's people and the people who are God's enemies.

**The anti-Christ has entered the conflict with the people of Jesus -
1 John 2; 4; 2 Thess. 2**

At the end the anti-Christ will have a greater incarnation than ever before Daniel 7-12.

Satan's attack on the believing community will be greater than ever before (Revelation 12:7-17).

Daniel 12:7–13 (ESV)

⁷ And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished. ⁸I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, “O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?” ⁹He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. ¹⁰Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand. ¹¹And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days. ¹²Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days. ¹³But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.”

Has anyone ever told you, “You’re testing my patience.” That’s not the kind of test where you give the person an “A, B, C, D, or F.” It’s more like pushing the limit, so see how far you can go before everything blows up in your face. A test of faith is not a test that receives a grade, but through tests of faith we learn just how far our faith will go before it fails.

Withstanding Tribulation's Tests

It could mean that God is at work and Satan is angry, so don’t throw in the towel before God has completed the work He has begun.

[1 John 2:18](#) - antichrists have come, showing this is the last hour. This is an allusion to [Daniel 8:11&12](#), which is clearly about the final Tribulation. John is saying that the tribulation is underway. It will get much worse, but it has begun.

Those who believe in Christ should be clear that the struggle against sin is both internal and external. It comes from our own sinful desires, but also from the opposition of the Enemy, Satan.

Conflict between good and evil is normal, and should not drive us off course in our obedience to God.

Satan will have his place in heaven ([Revelation 12:8](#)).

There was a place in heaven given to Satan where he could accuse God's followers ([Job 1:6-11; 2:1-6; Zechariah 3:1-2](#)).

. That is, Satan's deception of Adam and Eve that characterized the beginning of history has been typologically reproduced, so that Satan's primal deception comes to characterize the end of history, the age of the last Adam, not merely that period directly before Christ's second coming but the time extending from Christ's first coming until his last coming. This reflects the scriptural pattern that God has designed that "the last things be like the first things" (cf. Barn. 6:13). That such a redemptive-historical pattern is in mind in parts of the NT is evident in, for example, 1 John, where the following ideas unique to Gen. 3 appear together:

1. mention of "the devil," who "sinned from the beginning," in direct connection with and exhortation not to be "deceived" (3:7–8; cf. Gen. 3:13);
2. mention of "children of the devil" in contrast with "the children of God" and God's "seed" (3:9–10; cf. Gen. 3:15);
3. mention of "Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother" (3:12; cf. Gen. 4:1–15).

Paul also testifies to this recapitulated primal satanic deception of the first humans. In Rom. 16:17–20 he says,

Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

As in the first covenant community in Eden, so again in the believing community in Rome, there is "deception" and a need to be "wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil." If the Roman Christians continue in their faithful "obedience" (Rom. 16:19, 26) and heed Paul's exhortation not to be deceived by the false teachers in their midst, then "the God of peace will ... crush Satan under your feet," a clear reference to a beginning fulfillment of Gen. 3:15. Genesis 3:15 prophesies that the woman's "seed" will "bruise" the serpent "on the head." No doubt, Paul saw Jesus's death and

resurrection as the decisive blow on the serpent's head, but since the devil has yet to be consigned to his eternal prison of punishment, he still "prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Thus, Jesus won a "D-day"-like victory over the devil, and the "body of Christ" walks in the wake of that decisive victory in "mopping-up operations" over Satan and his allies, who continue to put up resistance, though the final outcome of "V-day" is inevitable at Christ's final coming. The Roman Christians will participate in these mopping-up operations as a result of Jesus having already defeated Satan, and in this sense they also can be seen as fulfilling the Gen. 3:15 prophecy.