

## What On Earth Is Going On? Matthew 24:15-30 “The Day of The Lord (Part 2 - The Great Tribulation)”

### Introduction

For the past few weeks we have been conducting a study of the end times. Now I'm not one of those preachers who goes around talking about end-time prophecy and little else, as some are wont to do these days. I do, however, feel that it is necessary for every believer to be able to look at the seemingly chaotic things going on in the world around us these days, and yet, have complete confidence that God is still in control. With this thought in mind, I have attempted to explain that everything that is happening in our world today, must in fact happen, in order for the prophecies of God to be fulfilled. There is a design to the chaos. The last days are fast approaching, and everything that Christ has said will happen IS in fact beginning to happen. We, The Church, should therefore respond accordingly, not with fear and dread, but rather with hope and faith. Jesus is coming soon, just as He promised. We must always comfort one another with these words, when everything around us seems to be plunging headlong into darkness. He will never leave us, nor forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6; Hebrews 13:5). It is a truth that spans from the Old Testament to the New. God will protect His people.

Last week we studied the first three and a half years of The Tribulation Period, a seven year period at the end of days, in which the Antichrist will come to rule the world. During the first three and a half years of the tribulation, he will appear to be a great friend of Israel, that is until the Islamic and Russian alliance has been crushed, and he will no longer need the Jews. Then he will bring his armies to Jerusalem and set up an image of himself in their temple, the very one that he helped them to build! He will demand that all the world worship him as God. Multitudes will worship “the beast”, but many will refuse. He will then begin a merciless campaign of slaughter against any who would oppose him. Jesus warned that this day would come, and when it did, when the image of the antichrist was set up to be worshipped, He had but one command to the Jewish people: “Run for your very lives” (Matthew 24:15-16). It will be a time of unprecedented horror (vs.21), known as “The Great Tribulation”. The only positive things that will ever be said about this final half of the Antichrist's reign of terror is that many will turn to Christ, and that it will only last for three and a half years! Jesus Himself said that if it lasted any longer, then no one would be able to survive it (vs. 22).

It would be impossible for us to cover all the things that will take place during The Great Tribulation period, for it will not only be a time in which the Antichrist will persecute Israel, but it will also be a time when God pours out His righteous judgements against the wicked on the earth. These judgements will begin when Jesus, the Lamb of God, opens a scroll that represents His title deed to the earth (Rev. 5:2-5). This deed is sealed with seven seals. Each of these seals represent a specific judgment that will be executed in order for Christ to take His rightful claim as Lord over all the earth. Within the seventh and final seal, there are “Seven Trumpet Judgments” and included in the last trumpet judgment, there are Seven Bowls of Wrath” (Revelation 6-16). It would take a year of Sundays' to thoroughly cover all of these judgments. So needless to say, in the interest of time, we will only be talking about a portion of the events that will accompany the last three and a half years of the Antichrist, known as The Great Tribulation. I truly hope that this will create a desire in each of you to further your understanding by studying the great *Book of Revelation*. It is the only book in all of scripture that promises a blessing to those who study it (Revelation 1:3), so that alone should give you the incentive! Today we will examine three components of The Great Tribulation, (also known as The Day of The Lord): The Great Escape, The Great Extermination, and Jesus, The Great and Everlasting King. So let us begin.

### The Great Escape

In His Olivet Discourse, Jesus warns those living in Jerusalem in the last days to flee the city when they see “the abomination of desolation” spoken of in Daniel (vs. 15). This is a reference to the image of the Antichrist being set up in the temple. The Lord warns the people living in those days to get out as fast as they can when they see the image being set up. I love the section added by Matthew which says “let the reader understand”, for I believe in those days when The Church has been raptured, there will be a great many people who will turn to *The Bible* as a source for answers. God tells us that “His Word will not return to Him void” (Isaiah 55:11), meaning simply, that God's Word will always accomplish what He intends. I believe that many in the last days will begin to open their Bibles and see that everything that is happening around them has been foretold in God's Word. There will only be two obvious choices to make in those days; Christ or the Antichrist. Many according to the scriptures will choose Christ and will pay for that choice with their very lives. The Jews will have no choice but to flee into the wilderness to escape the wrath of the beast. Satan will realize that his days are numbered, for he

too knows how to read the scriptures. He will turn up the heat against the nation he so despises, the nation of Israel. The Antichrist who will be resurrected from the assassination attempt upon his life will be the very embodiment of Satan, and he will try one last time to wipe the Jewish people from the face of the earth (**Revelation 12:12-16**). Though many will perish, the remnant of Israel will be spared, and will turn to Christ for their salvation (**Romans 11:26**). It will be a great escape, a great "exodus" if you will, in which The Lord will provide for the people of Israel. Those who will "understand" the clear warning will be the ones who will turn to the scriptures and obey the command of Christ to flee. Israel will remain hidden in the wilderness and await the coming of The Lord when they will **"look upon Him, the One they have 'pierced', and will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child and grieve bitterly for Him as one grieves for a firstborn Son" (Zechariah 12:10)**. For, The LORD Jesus, whom they rejected will soon be coming to their rescue. The Great Tribulation will be a **"time of trouble for 'Jacob' (Israel), but he will be saved out of it" (Jeremiah 30:7)**.

## **The Great Extermination**

**"The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."** **Matthew 24:29**

All the while, the beast will be trying to destroy Israel, and God will be pouring out His wrath upon the face of the earth. As we have stated earlier, it would be impossible to cover all that God will do during this time, but just to give an example I will address the "seven bowls" of wrath that God will pour out upon the wicked in the final stages of the Great Tribulation. This will allow us to have some sense of what it will be like to live upon the earth during the last three and a half years before the return of Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The Seven Bowls of Wrath are as follows:

1. Ugly and painful sores upon all of those who worship the beast (**Revelation 16:1-2**).
2. The oceans will turn to blood (**Revelation 16:3**).
3. Rivers and springs turn to blood (**Revelation 16:4-7**).
4. Scorching heat (**Revelation 16:8-9**).
5. Darkness upon the kingdom of the antichrist (**Revelation 16:10**).
6. All the armies of earth will be drawn to the plain of Megiddo (**Revelation 16:12-16**).
7. Hailstones weighing 100 pounds hurled down upon the armies of the Antichrist (**Revelation 16:17-21**).

I want you to just imagine the horror of those seven judgements being poured out upon the earth. On the one hand, there will be the beast persecuting all who would stand against him, and all the while, God is pouring His wrath down upon the earth. And do you know what *The Bible* says that those who worship the beast will do as a result? They will curse GOD, that's what (**Revelation 16:11**)!! Rather than fall to their knees in repentance, they will cling to their sin till the bitter end. That just proves how deep-seated the wickedness of men will be in the last days. Makes perfect sense now when we read what Paul said in **2 Timothy 3:1-4**:

**"But mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God."**

In spite of experiencing the very wrath of God; including the seven bowl judgments, in conjunction with the terrifying signs in the heavens (the darkening of the sun, the disappearance of the stars, and the moon appearing as blood red; **Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:12-13**), the people will still fail to worship and honor the LORD of all creation, because they are so bent upon living for themselves, rather than become subject to the reign of The Almighty God. What total depravity there will be in the last days!

The final stroke will come when God will entice the armies of the world to the Plain of Megiddo, some fifty miles north of Jerusalem. It is there that the final battle of good vs. evil will be waged. It won't be much of a battle really, more like a slaughter, an extermination, if you will. For King Jesus will come and annihilate the forces of the antichrist when He appears in the clouds. **Every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that He is**

**Lord (Romans 14:11)**, and the people of earth who have chosen the beast, rather than King Jesus, will mourn bitterly, but their fate will be sealed at that point (**Matthew 24:30**). The time for repentance will be over, and the people of God will be gathered around their King. The Church and The Nation of Israel will finally, and forever, be grafted together as one in the Kingdom of God (**Romans 11:1-25**)!

### **Jesus, The Great and Everlasting King**

Due to the stressful nature of the Great Tribulation period, there will apparently be many who will be convinced that they are in fact "The Messiah" sent to deliver the Jews from their persecution. Perhaps the Antichrist himself will send out many such deceivers in an attempt to lure the Jews out of hiding. Jesus warns those living in the last days not to be fooled by any rumors of "false Christs" claiming to be Him. He tells His disciples that when He returns there will be no doubt as to who He is (**vs.24-28**). He assures them that the sign of His coming will not be hidden or secretive, but instead, it will be like lightning flashing across the earth (**vs. 27**).

He follows this with a statement that, until recently, I found to be rather curious and confusing. He says, and I quote, **"For wheresoever the carcass is, there will be eagles gathered together (vs.28)"**. I have had a great deal of trouble understanding why The LORD would use the image of a dead body with vultures circling above it to signify His second coming. He is certainly NOT going to return as a corpse when he comes again. He was crucified the first time that He came, but He will return as a conquering King! Then I saw it. **Revelation 19:17-18** says,

**"And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty: of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people free and slave, great and small."**

You see, when Christ returns to the earth, He will do so in a mighty and public way. And according to **Revelation 19**, He will come wearing a white robe dipped in blood, riding a white horse, followed by the Armies of heaven (which includes The Church). On His thigh is written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He will destroy the armies of the Antichrist with such ferocious slaughter that the birds of the earth will all gather to feast upon the carcasses of the slain. Simply put, all who remain upon the earth will be able to find Christ, when, and where, they see all the birds of this world circling in the sky! **"Where the carcass is, the eagles will gather."** Jesus will not be hard to find when He returns. At the rapture, He will gather up His Church like a thief in the night (**Matthew 24:39-44**), but when He comes to this earth to claim it as His inheritance, there will be nothing secretive about it. He will show Himself publicly when He comes to reign, and He will rule the nations with a rod of iron (**Revelation 2:27**). The next time that He comes, it will be as a conquering King coming in power and majesty to restore all things.

My reason for teaching these truths today is simple. I want everyone to know that God is in control. No matter what is going on in the world around us, His plan will never be shaken. From **Genesis to Revelation**, Jesus is Lord. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. The One Who was, and is, and is yet to come. The Bible is HIS-Story!

- In Genesis: He is Creator God and The Promised Seed
- In Exodus: He is The Passover Lamb
- In Leviticus: He is our High Priest
- In Numbers: He is The Rock who gives water in the desert
- In Deuteronomy: He is our Teacher
- In Joshua: He is Commander of the Army of The Lord
- In Judges: He is the LORD of Peace
- In Ruth: He is our Kinsmen Redeemer
- In 1 Samuel: He is the Prophet, Priest, and King
- In 2 Samuel: He is our Rock of Salvation
- In 1 Kings: He is The Builder of an Everlasting Temple
- In 2 Kings: He is The Reigning King
- In 1 Chronicles: He is The Son of David coming to reign
- In 2 Chronicles: He is The King who reigns eternally
- In Ezra: He is The Priest proclaiming freedom

- In Nehemiah: He is The One who restores the broken
- In Esther: He is The Protector of His people
- In Job: He is The Mediator between God and man
- In Psalms: He is our Song in the Morning and at night
- In Proverbs: He is our Wisdom and Strong Tower
- In Ecclesiastes: He is the Meaning of Life
- In Song of Solomon: He is The Author of Faithful love
- In Isaiah: He is Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace
- In Jeremiah: He is The Weeping Messiah
- In Ezekiel: He is The Son of Man
- In Lamentations: He takes God's wrath for us
- In Daniel: He is The Fourth Man in the fire
- In Hosea: He is the Faithful Husband to the unfaithful
- In Joel: He is The Baptizer of The Holy Spirit
- In Amos: He is the deliverer of Justice
- In Obadiah: He is Mighty to save
- In Jonah: He is The Great Missionary
- In Micah: He casts our sin into the sea of forgetfulness
- In Nahum: He proclaims peace
- In Habakkuk: He crushes injustice
- In Zephaniah: He is The Warrior who saves
- In Haggai: He restores our worship
- In Zechariah: He is The Branch that saves
- In Malachi: He is The Son of Righteousness
- In Matthew: He is The Messiah
- In Mark: He is The Servant God
- In Luke: He is God and Man
- In John: He is God
- In Acts: He is The Spirit who dwells in His people
- In Romans: He is The Power of God unto salvation
- In 1 Corinthians: He is our conqueror
- In 2 Corinthians: He is The Down Payment of what is to come
- In Galatians: He is our inheritance
- In Ephesians: He is our peace
- In Philippians: He is The God who supplies our needs
- In Colossians: He is supreme in all things
- In 1 Thessalonians: He is our comfort in the last days
- In 2 Thessalonians: He is our returning King
- In 1 Timothy: He is our Crown of Righteousness
- In 2 Timothy: He is Christ, our Helper
- In Titus: He is our Hope
- In Philemon: He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother
- In Hebrews: He is our High Priest
- In James: He is The Great Physician
- In 1 Peter: He is our hope in times of suffering
- In 2 Peter: He is the restorer of all things
- In 1 John: He is our Love and Light
- In 2 John: He is Christ come in the flesh
- In 3 John: He is our prosperity, health and peace
- In Jude: He is Jesus who is coming again
- In Revelation: He is The King of Kings and Lord of Lords

His Name is Jesus, He is The Great and Everlasting King, and if you belong to Him, then you have nothing on earth to fear!

And ALL of God's people said... TRUTH!!!