

## Episode #916 Matthew 24 Part 5-The Great Tribulation

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. The Lord was answering His disciples as to what would be the sign of His Parousia, and what will be the sign of the consummation of the eon. He had talked about wars, famines, plagues, and earthquakes, which will begin again after a long period without them. Then, He teaches about the setting up of the “abomination of desolation” in the temple of God.

III. The Abomination of Desolation. Matthew 24:15-20.

A. Verse 17. “The housetop” is the roof. Their houses were built with flat roofs that were a part of the house and used like a deck or porch. They were used for walking, meditation, prayer, and even socializing, especially in the cool of the evening. If they are there, they are not to come down to enter their house to get anything.

B. Verse 18. “In the field” means away from the house. Remember that the LORD took care of the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years under Moses. Their clothes and shoes did not wear out, Deuteronomy 8:4. If God could do that with them, He can do it again with these who flee as is described here.

C. Verse 19. The word “woe” has two uses. It is used to mean sorrow, and it is used with the idea of “Give due heed! Take note!” For example, woe be unto you when all men speak well of you, Luke 6:26. But that is not a sorrowful thing. I would like it if everyone spoke well of me and would listen to and hear my message. That would be very good. But I would have to watch out if everyone spoke well of me. Woe has that significance here. He is telling them to give due heed to pregnant women and mothers in those days. He is speaking to the responsible men who will be in charge at this flight. They will be leaders in government, rulers over tribes, along with rulers over cities, rulers over thousands, rulers over hundreds, rulers over fifties, and so forth. These men are to give due heed to pregnant women and nursing mothers in that difficult time, and to give them the most tender care. It is the merciful kindness of the Lord that breaks through here. Note: no elderly in God’s government.

D. Verse 20. Sometimes we think “winter starts on December 21st.” But no, that is just a thing on the calendar. Winter conditions are a different matter. Sometimes there is no winter at all. They are to ask that they do not make their flight in winter. If it is winter on the calendar, the Lord can change the conditions so it is more like spring or fall or even summer, and their flight will not be in the hardship of cold and rain (not typically snow, which is rare in Judea). These people are observing the Sabbath. They are Israelites living in Judea, and they are keeping the Sabbath. This flight cannot be on Saturday, for then they would be violating the Sabbath. So they are to make this request that He will keep this from happening on the Sabbath day.

IV. The Great Tribulation. Matthew 24:21-28.

A. Verse 21. “Then” refers to when they see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place and flee to the mountains.

B. There is no article here, though this is what most people call “the Great Tribulation.” This brings this important matter before us of the Great Tribulation.

C. According to my studies and understanding of Israel’s future, I believe in a time to come when, according to Ezekiel 34:11-15, the Lord seeks out Israel and brings them

back to the land, reconstituting them as a nation. Yet today in almost all premillennial theology (and fundamental theology and evangelical theology), it is held that this blessed condition of the kingdom of God can never come about until there has been a Divine outpouring of wrath that will be worse than anything men have ever experienced before, and this they call the Great Tribulation. It is supposed to be characterized by a great outpouring of God's anger, and God is supposed to act with a fiendish and foolish cruelty that is supposed to exceed all the cruel and unusual punishments men have ever devised in the long and sorry record of man's inhumanity to man. This time of God's wrath is usually called "the Great Tribulation," and this phrase is lifted from the Word of God from this verse. It is then embellished with many cruel ideas of sadistic torture, and then used in a mystical manner in support of every wild statement that is made by these prophets of doom. This is illogical and unreasonable.

- D. The teaching is that this is the first work of God when God restarts His prophetic program, and this simply does not make sense. If a study of all prophecies regarding the future of Israel is made, it will be seen that next for the seed of Israel is to be blessed, not punished. While it is true that some will need to be purged from Israel, this will be because of their actions in regard to the great blessings of God. The Divine record concerning Israel tells of a dispersal followed by a regathering. It tells of punishment followed by blessing. If we look at Israel today, we can accurately say, "Israel has been scattered, and now it is time for her to be regathered. Israel has been punished, and now it is time for Israel to be blessed." Israel has long been out of her land without a temple.
- E. Next for Israel is to be restored to the land and to rebuild the temple. That is confirmed by many great prophecies, like in Ezekiel 34. From that passage, it can be seen that Israel is in a state of complete dispersal and disorder when the great work of God begins in their behalf. He does not do this like a great wolf coming to tear the sheep to pieces. No, He does it as a Shepherd among the sheep. In that prophecy in Ezekiel 34, a Divine order is established. Note the key words: searching, seeking, delivering, gathering, bringing, feeding, binding, strengthening.
- F. You can find the same truth in Ezekiel 20, when after describing the five great rebellions of Israel, God declares that because of His determination to rule over them, He will bring them out, plead with them, cause them to pass under the rod, bring them into the covenant, and then He will purge out the rebels from among them, Ezekiel 20:33-38. If we consider these two passages, they demonstrate that the next thing in order for Israel is regathering, restoration, and blessing.

V. Conclusion: Considering these two passages, how can some teach that the next thing for Israel is to experience God's terrible, horrifying wrath? This is simply not what the Bible teaches. We need a more Biblical view of the Great Tribulation than this.