

## **Review**

When Peter, James, John, and Andrew came to Jesus with questions about the end times, Jesus started His answer with a warning that there will be plenty of things that will make it seem like the end times, but that these were not the gauges to use to determine the end. False Christs, wars, famines, and earthquakes were not to be used to determine this.

Now, as He continues, He is going to describe exactly what the Tribulation will look like.

### **24:9-10 Martyrdom And Betrayal**

One thing that believers can expect in the Tribulation is universal hatred, persecution, and death. Now, it is important to keep in mind that although most American Christians are not aware of the people killed for their witness of Jesus Christ around the world today, it happens - a lot.

The number of martyrs estimated to have been killed in the last 2,000 years is 70 million. But two thirds of that number (45.5 million) have been killed in just the last hundred years! (Source: World Christian Encyclopedia, 2001. Martyrs are defined as, "Believers in Christ who have lost their lives prematurely in situations of witness as a result of human hostility.")

During the Tribulation, persecution and death for Jews and believers in Christ will be common, and practiced in every nation on the earth.

The persecutions will put a dividing line between people of true faith and others. There will be some who will have thought that faith was a good thing, until they begin to see people dying for faith. At that point, they will become turncoats, betraying friends and family who are true believers.

### **24:11-12 False Prophets Misleading Many**

There will be an abundance of false prophets, preaching all sorts of doctrines of untruth. Paul defined sound doctrine as the words...

**1Tim. 6:3 ...of our Lord Jesus Christ, and ... the doctrine con-**

### **forming to godliness...**

The false prophets in the Tribulation will be focused on words that have not come from Christ, and certainly are not godly. As a result, Jesus said, the love of most people will grow cold.

Even today, as our society descends into more and more sin being accepted, commonplace, and exposure to it being inescapable, we have seen the effect on Christians. Divorce, abuse, infidelity, and compromise permeate the church. Lukewarmness abounds. And fewer and fewer are "on fire" for the Lord.

Imagine what will happen when the church is no longer the light and salt to the world! When there are no longer many voices making a stand for righteousness, but many false prophets are misleading people. In those days, lukewarmness will be replaced by cold hearts. It will be just like David said in his day,

**Psa. 12:1 Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases to be, for the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.**

### **24:13 The One Who Endures To The End Will Be Saved**

This verse has often been quoted out of context by people trying to prove various philosophies. But it is vital that we keep the text in its context. Remember that the disciples had asked Jesus about the end of the age (Matt. 24:3). In verse six, we saw that Jesus said wars, famines, earthquakes, and false Christs were not the sign of "the end."

And so as He speaks of enduring to "the end," we realize that He is speaking of those who endure to the end of the age, the end of the Tribulation, when He returns.

Those would be saved. Is that "saved" like we think of it? No, not regarding eternal life, but read in context, their physical life being saved. As we continue reading, we'll see in verse 22 Jesus saying,

**Matt. 24:22 "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved..."**

### **24:14 The Gospel Preached In The Whole World**

Again, this next verse has also been quoted incorrectly. Many

people have taken this to mean that missionaries must preach to every human being before Christ can come back. But notice, Jesus is saying what will be preached to the whole world is, "This gospel of the kingdom." Remember, in context, Jesus hasn't been speaking of salvation by grace, but that in the final days, the kingdom of God will be coming to earth very soon. That is the good news (gospel) which will be preached to the whole world. The apostle John tells us in Revelation 14,

**Rev. 14:6-7 And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."**

During the time of the tribulation, this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world to all the nations, and then the end will come.

### **24:15-22 The Abomination Of Desolation**

Jesus says, "Therefore." In other words, "Because of everything I've just told you regarding persecution, false prophets misleading people, and love growing cold, I'm giving you the sign that will signal when you need to high-tail it out of town."

In the last days, those in Judea need to watch for "the abomination of desolation" that Daniel spoke of. This is when an abominable false god would be set up in the temple, making it desolate.

This had happened once before - about 200 years earlier - when Antiochus Epiphanes put a statue of Zeus in the temple, and sacrificed a pig on the altar. He smeared the pig's blood on the priests and on the walls of the holy place. As horrifying as this event was in Jewish history, Jesus warns that a similar event would happen again, this time committed by the man we call the antichrist.

Paul the apostle gives us a little more information in the book of 2Thessalonians, saying,

**2Th. 2:3-4 ...the man of lawlessness (will be) revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.**

The antichrist will establish himself as God. Notice that the statement, "Let the reader understand," was not a narrative insertion by the author for the reader of Matthew, but the comment of Jesus referring to the reader of Daniel. This is because the book of Daniel tells us that...

**Dan. 12:11 "From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days."**

In other words, this will be the midpoint of the final seven years of man's rule on earth. It will be just three and a half years until Christ's return when the antichrist commits this abominable act.

### **A Great Tribulation**

Those final three and a half years will be horrifying to anyone who denies that the antichrist is God. The Jews will be massacred, such as has never been seen in earth's history. Zechariah's sad prophecy regarding the Jews in those days is that only one third of them will survive.

**Zech. 13:8-9 "It will come about in all the land," Declares the LORD, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"**

When will they have the opportunity to cry out to God? In the final three and a half years during which they are hiding out in the wilderness.

### **Flee To The Mountains**

The Jews in Judea who follow Jesus' command to flee to the moun-

tains will be supernaturally protected from the antichrist's onslaught. Based on a couple passages in Isaiah, it would seem that the rock-hewn city of Petra will be their refuge.

In the Bible, Petra is called "Sela." And, in Isaiah 16 (verses 1-4) we see that there will be people fleeing, outcasts that need hiding, coming to Sela. Later, in chapter 42 (verses 11-13), we read that there will be inhabitants of Sela praising God when the Lord returns.

Jesus emphasizes that from the moment the abomination of desolation happens, there will not be a minute to spare. They must head for the mountains immediately.

### **The Elect**

By the way, Christians have been confused about the term, "the elect," believing that Jesus is talking about the Church. While we don't have the time this morning to do a thorough study of that subject, it is clear that in the Bible that there are three groups called the "elect." Israel, the Church, and those who will be saved in the Tribulation period.

In any case, it is clear that the elect here are in a Jewish system living under Jewish laws, because Israel's transportation systems are almost completely shut down on the Sabbath day.

And, we will have the opportunity to talk next week about the many biblical reasons why I don't believe that the church will be here for any of these events.

### **24:23-27 Waiting For The Appearance Of Christ**

Those three and a half years of hiding in the wilderness will be fraught with peril. There will be many who try to deceive the Jews into coming out. They will say, "Hey, the real Messiah is here! Come on out!" But Jesus said, "Don't believe them. Because when I do return, it will be clearly obvious to the whole world."

The coming of Christ will be visible to the world, just like when lightning lights up the sky on a dark and stormy night.