

# Eschatology Part 7

## The Signs of the Times Part 2

### A. A Helpful Outline:

- I. Signs Evidencing the Grace of God:
  - a. The proclamation of the gospel to all nations
  - b. The salvation of the fullness of Israel
- II. Signs Indicating Opposition to God:
  - a. Tribulation
  - b. Apostasy
  - c. Antichrist
- III. Signs Indicating Divine Judgment:
  - a. Wars
  - b. Earthquakes
  - c. Famines

### B. Another Major Biblical Text **Matthew 24:1-ff**

➤ Introduction: "Olivet Discourse"

➤ Vs. 1-3 Context

➤ Vs. 4-5

- 1 John 2:18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

➤ Vs. 6-8

➤ Vs. 9-14

- Matt. 10:17-23

- Vs. 12-13 Apostasy

- Vs. 14 Sign: The Gospel to all nations!!!

➤ Vs. 15-28

- What is being referred to here?
  - The destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. Luke 21:7-24
  - Horrible Time: "Luke's unique reference to "its" desolation clearly means the city in the context of Luke 21:20. Josephus notes that 1.1 million Jews were

killed and 97,000 taken captive in this period. Even children were cooked for food in the midst of the siege that Jesus anticipates here. Unfaithfulness to God leads to national judgment. The city will collapse under siege. Jesus says such a fate for the religious center should not catch the disciples by surprise." Darrell Bock, Luke Vol. 2, p 1676

- Does it describe another as well? Final Antichrist and a Great Tribulation?

But we also find Jesus in the Olivet Discourse speaking of a final tribulation which is in store for his people—a tribulation of which the sufferings which would accompany the destruction of Jerusalem would be only an anticipation. Note the intensity of the following description: "For then there will be great tribulation (*thlipsis megalē*), such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been shortened, no human being would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened" (Matt. 24:21-22). Though the setting of these words has a distinctly Jewish and Judean flavor ("Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath," v. 20), the words "no, and never will be" and the reference to the shortening of the days for the elect's sake indicate that Jesus is predicting a tribulation so great that it will surpass any similar tribulation which may have preceded it. In other words, Jesus is here looking beyond the tribulation in store for the Jews at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem to a final tribulation which will occur at the end of this age. For according to verses 29 and 30 Jesus goes on to indicate that this "great tribulation" will immediately precede his Second Coming: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken; then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

We conclude, then, that the sign of tribulation is not restricted to the end-time, but characterizes the entire age between Christ's two comings. Because of the continued opposition of the world to the kingdom of God, Christians must expect to suffer tribulation and persecution of one kind or another during this entire age. On the basis of Jesus' words in Matthew 24:21-30, however, it would appear that there will also be a final, climactic tribulation just before Christ returns. This tribulation will not be basically different from earlier tribulations which God's people have had to suffer, but will be an intensified form of those earlier tribulations.

➤ Vs. 29 Cosmic Changes

- “There is to be the cosmic renovation. The cosmic commotions of verse 29 are consonant with the descriptions given elsewhere respecting the great change that will take place in the cosmos” John Murray, Collected Writings, Vol. 2, p. 391
- See Romans 8:18-23 and 2 Peter 3:10-13
- “The cosmic upheavals will fill men with consternation (Luke 21:25-26). Believers are not to be filled with horror (Luke 21:28). When they see these things, they are to know that the hour has come.” Murray

➤ Vs. 30-31

- 1 Thess. 4:16-18 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be **caught up together** with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Therefore comfort one another with these words.
- Same root word with “will gather together” in vs. 30

➤ Vs. 32-35

- “these things” compare vs. 3

Application:

The sign of tribulation, like the other signs of the times already discussed, does not enable us to date the Second Coming of Christ with exactness. The people of God must suffer tribulation throughout this era; when the final, intensified form of this tribulation will occur is hard to say. Perhaps for some Christians living in the world today the Great Tribulation has already begun. William Hendriksen suggests that the Great Tribulation need not come over the entire world at the same time, but may already be experienced by Christians who are being persecuted for their faith in countries controlled by anti-Christian governments.<sup>22</sup>

In any event, this sign should put us all on our guard. When Christians suffer tribulation or persecution, this is to be recognized as a sign of the approaching return of Christ. The question is, Is our faith strong enough to withstand tribulation?