

Lesson #8: The Tribulation – Matthew 24

Introduction: Premillennialists believe and boldly teach that when the world is to come to an end the church will be “raptured” and this event will be followed by a seven (7) year period called the “great tribulation” on the earth. When the rapture signals the beginning of the last seven-year period before the second coming and the establishment of the Millennium, the great tribulation will begin. The church will be raptured (taken to heaven) and the Holy Spirit will be removed. An outbreak of evil and tribulation such as the earth has never known will begin, we are told. The purpose of this tribulation is: 1. bring about the conversion of Jews, 2. turn the Gentiles to God, 3. pour out judgment on unbelievers.

The word “tribulation” means “to press”, “to press together,” “to press hard upon,” and refers to times of oppression, affliction and distress (Thayer). It is used to describe the state of:

- Those hard pressed by siege and calamities of war (Matt. 24:21,29; Mark 13:19,24).
- Those pressed by want and poverty (2 Cor. 8:13; Phil. 4:14).
- A woman in child-birth (Jno. 16:21).
- Afflictions Christ had to undergo (and from which His followers must not shirk. (Col. 1:24).
- Anxiety, burden of heart (2 Cor. 2:4).

According to the religious world, the ‘tribulation’ will be a period of great tribulation out of which many will be saved. They want to use (Rev. 7:14) as one of their strongholds of this fabricated theory of a “great tribulation.”

The Premillennialists use of (Matthew 24:21) of a ‘Great Tribulation’ is ably refuted by Foy E. Wallace, Jr., who stated:

There are some very definite reasons why this passage cannot refer to the Millennial Tribulation idea. First, the faithful disciples were commanded to flee to the mountains at this time, as seen in (verse 16) but according to the Millennial tribulation theory, the disciples would be up in the heavens with Jesus and there would be no disciples left on the earth to flee to the mountains. That alone nullifies the argument that the ‘tribulation’ of (Matt. 24) is the millennial tribulation. Second, the disciples were told to pray that their flight from Jerusalem should not be in the winter, as mentioned in (verse 20). Third, they were told to pray that their flight be not on the Sabbath day, — lest they find the gates closed.

Premillennial Position:

- “The nature of tribulation. ...First, it is a unique period. ...Secondly, it is a period of judgment upon the nations. ...Thirdly, it will be a period of persecution of Israel. ...Fourthly, it will be a period of salvation” (Charles Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, p.141-142).
- Concerning Matthew 24, LaHaye says, “The first thing our Lord wanted His disciples – and us – to know about the end times is that there will be many deceivers and false messiahs who will lead people astray...Historically, the church age has seen many false religious teachers but they will be even more pronounced just before the Tribulation and increasingly throughout it” (*Charting End Times*, p.35).
- “The first great purpose of the tribulation is to prepare the nation Israel for her Messiah. The prophecy of Jeremiah (30:7) make it clear that this time that is coming has particular reference to Israel, for it is “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” God’s purpose for Israel in the Tribulation is to bring about the conversion of a multitude of Jews, who will enter into the blessings of the kingdom and experience the fulfilment of all Israel’s covenants. The good news that the King is about to return will be preached (Matt. 24:14) so that Israel may be turned to their deliverer.” (*Things to Come, Pentecost*, J. Dwight, Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1964. P.237).

Questions for Discussion (Biblical Position): Matthew 24 and the Destruction of Jerusalem

1. What prediction did Jesus make (Mt. 24:1-2)?
2. What question(s) did the disciples ask Jesus about this prophecy (Mt. 24:3)?
3. What time frame did Jesus place on the fulfillment of this prophecy (Mt. 24:34)?
4. What was NOT a sign of the destruction (Mt. 24:4-8)?
5. What would happen before the destruction (Mt. 24:9-13)?
 - Was this fulfilled (Ac. 8:1-2; 9:23, 29; 12:2; 13:45; 14:5, 19; 16:22-24; 17:5, 13; 19:29; 21:27; 1 Pt. 4:12)?
6. What would happen before the destruction (Mt. 24:14)?
 - When was this fulfilled (Col. 1:23)?
7. What was the sign that the end had come (Mt. 24:15)?
 - When was this fulfilled?
8. What was the person to do when he saw the sign (Mt. 24:16-20)?
 - Does this instruction make sense if Jesus was talking about the Tribulation period as Premillennialists claim?
9. How terrible would this destruction be (Mt. 24:21-22)?
 - How many died in the destruction of Jerusalem?
10. The “coming of the Son of Man” was described in Mt. 24:27-31. Jesus used figurative language to describe God’s coming in judgment against Jerusalem. This language was used in several other context in reference to God’s judgment on a nation. Please read: Ps. 18:7-12; Isa. 13:9-10; 19:1; Jer. 4:27-29; Ez. 32:7-8; Mic. 1:3-4
11. What was Jesus’ admonition to His disciples (Mt. 24:32-35)?

Conclusions:

1. The course of events taught in the Bible are:
 - This world will end (II Pet. 3:7-10).
 - All the dead raised (John 5:28-29).
 - Final judgment (Matt. 25:31; II Thess. 1:5-10).
 - Christ will deliver up the kingdom (I Cor. 15:24).
 - The disobedient will be rejected.
2. The language of Mt 24 is not referring to the second coming, but the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. It was fulfilled prophecy.
3. Tribulation and trials are lot and life for God’s people throughout all of time and in these “last days” (Hb. 1:1-4).
4. “The Tribulation” period is not based on any Scriptures and is a fabrication of man that has permeated religious organizations. Some people “twist” the Scriptures to their own destruction and the destruction of others (2 Pt. 3:15-18).