



50: **Great Tribulation** (Mt 24:15-28)

The Judgment of Jerusalem - Part 3

Great Tribulation. *What IS it and WHEN is it going to happen? Is it PAST or FUTURE? Today we discover what Jesus said about this "great tribulation".*

beourguest

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teachingnotes

GREAT TRIBULATION - Where does this phrase come from? 3 New Testament texts - [Revelation 2:22](#), [7:14](#), and [Matthew 24:21](#).

Last week we noted that **the abomination of desolation**, referring to what Antiochus IV did to God's Temple & God's people in 168 BC, was a **FUTURE PROPHECY for Daniel's audience** in around 530 BC, but...it was **FULFILLED PROPHECY for the 1st century Apostles** who remembered this event every year (Hanukkah).

- 🕒 Jesus pointed His 1st century apostles to a FUTURE EVENT that was similar & yet much worse than the PAST EVENT.

Matthew 24:15-16 (NIV)

So when **you see** standing in the holy place '**the abomination that causes desolation**,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let **those who are in Judea** flee to the mountains.

- › Luke's Gospel takes a different angle here.

Luke 21:20-21 (NIV) When **you see** Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then **let those who are in Judea** flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city.

Why doesn't Luke use the phrase "abomination of desolation" like *Matthew & Mark* do?

- Luke is deciphering this Jewish language for his Gentile audience. Luke helps us understand what Jesus is talking about: The "**abomination of desolation standing in the holy place**" ([Mt 24:15](#), [Mk 13:14](#)) is Jewish language for **Jerusalem being surrounded by armies** who come to destroy the city & its temple.
- 🔍 **That occurred in AD 70**, when **General Titus** and his Roman troops finally broke through the walls after 5 1/2 months of besieging Jerusalem.

"**The abomination that causes desolation**" is imagery referring to "**Jerusalem being surrounded by armies**" - a *future prophecy* for the 1st century followers of Jesus, but it is *fulfilled prophecy* for anyone after it occurred in A.D. 70 - including US!

✗ Many have only heard this passage *being used to point to a FUTURE TEMPLE*, yet to be constructed.

✓ The Biblical text we have been reading from contains NO MENTION of a rebuilt temple. The focus of this conversation on the Mount of Olives was about the destruction of the Temple that stood in their day.

Abomination of Desolation & Great Tribulation

Matthew 24:15-28 (NIV)

So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress ["great tribulation" - ESV, NAS LSB], unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you ahead of time. So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the wilderness,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

Fleeing From the Abomination of Desolation

Matthew 24:15–20 (NIV) So when **you see** standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let **those who are in Judea** flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. How **dreadful** it will be in those days for **pregnant women** and **nursing mothers**! Pray that your flight will not take place in **winter** or on the **Sabbath**.

Jesus tells the 1st century disciples who see this event occurring, they are to flee to the mountains. Jesus warns *THEM* because when *THEY* see it, *THEY* can escape.

In OUR day, as **pregnant women and nursing mothers** speed off in vehicles. But *IN JESUS' DAY*, **pregnant women and nursing mothers** wouldn't make good time traveling as they have to take breaks to rest or stop to feed babies. When you're running from an invading army, this would mean probable capture or death.

In OUR DAY it wouldn't matter if it's **winter** because of our comfortable vehicles. But *IN JESUS' DAY*, traveling in the cover of darkness during **winter** would mean bitter cold & no fires to stay warm, as to not give away your position.

In OUR DAY it wouldn't matter if this **flight** away from the city of Jerusalem happened on a **Sabbath** - as most Gentiles don't view a Saturday as a holy day that limits their travel. But *IN JESUS' DAY*, traveling on the **Sabbath** was thought to be limited to 3/4 of a mile.

Jesus Warns Women of What is Coming

Luke 23:28–31 (NIV)

Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; **weep for yourselves and for your children**. For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then " 'they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" ' For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

If they chop down **when the tree is green** (i.e. vibrant/alive) killing their own Messiah, then how much worse will it be when the tree is **dry** and wilting - when difficult days are here?

Jesus was speaking of an event coming within *their lifetime*, but rather than considering women with children *BLESSED* by God, people would be thankful that they didn't have little children to watch them brutally die. That's why **they would pray for death** - wanting rocks to crush them rather than have to face the fury of the Roman army.

Luke 19:41–44 (NIV)

As he approached **Jerusalem** and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when **your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side**. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Dr. Luke adds even more clarity to what Jesus said during the Olivet Discourse, and why followers of Jesus needed to get out of Jerusalem before it was too late. Notice that the **great distress** is in the **land** of Israel & God's **wrath against** the unbelieving **people** of Israel who rejected their Messiah.

Luke 21:23–24 (NIV)

How dreadful it will be in those days for **pregnant women and nursing mothers**! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will **fall by the sword** and will be **taken as prisoners to all the nations**. **Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles** until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Matthew 24:15–20 (NIV)

How **dreadful** it will be in those days for **pregnant women and nursing mothers**! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.

Great Tribulation

Matthew 24:21–22 (NIV) For then there will be **great distress** [great tribulation - ESV, NAS, LSB], unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the **sake of the elect** those days will be shortened.

Jesus is still referring to the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. This **great distress** - what other translations call "**great tribulation**" - is local to the land of Judea, not the world. According to Jesus, it was going to be awful. He uses familiar hyperbolic language used in the Scriptures referring to God's judgment (Ex 11:6, Eze 5:9) - exaggeration to make a point - "**unequaled...and never to be equaled again**". For those who claim this "great tribulation" is a *FUTURE EVENT* after the followers of Jesus are raptured to heaven - *there's a major speed bump to deal with* - that **these days would be cut short for WHO?** The **elect** - Jewish followers of Jesus.

False Messiahs & Prophets

Matthew 24:23-26 (NIV)

At that time if anyone says to **you**, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For **false messiahs** and **false prophets** will appear and **perform great signs** and **wonders to deceive**, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told **you** ahead of time. So if anyone tells **you**, 'There he is, out in the wilderness,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.

② Who is **YOU** throughout this talk? The apostles - 1st century followers of Jesus. Jesus warns that when all this comes there will be many who claim to be the **messiah** to lead the people of Jerusalem out of this mess.

The Judgment of Jesus on Jerusalem

Matthew 24:27-28 (NIV)

For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be **the coming of the Son of Man**. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

Jesus (**the Son of Man**) is **coming!** *But is this referring to the 2nd coming of Jesus?* This seems to be **the coming** Jesus promised would occur bringing judgment against their enemies before the apostles finished going through the towns of Israel - (Mt 10:23). This is referring to judgment on Jerusalem as the last phrase clarifies: **Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather**. This is the picture of death.

- Where vultures circle & land, there is DEATH. This is exactly what Jesus is referring to. He was **coming** to bring Judgment & DEATH to Jerusalem. Although Jesus WILL one day visibly return, and there will be NO DOUBT Who He is, this text is referring to His unmistakable **judgment** - like a **lightning flash** that sends people to seek shelter.

Get Out of Jerusalem!

Matthew 24:15-16 (NIV)

So when **you see** standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let **those who are in Judea** flee to the mountains.

The typical response to invasion was to run a fortified city and there was no city better fortified than Jerusalem with its great walls. But Jesus had warned his apostles who would later warn their disciples: "*Get out of Jerusalem!*"

In A.D. 68 **Vespasian**, Nero's general killed many Jews on his way to besiege Jerusalem, but hearing of Nero's suicide and civil war erupting, returned to Rome.

☀ **Eusebius** (fourth-century Christian & historian) records what Christians did before the Romans returned to Jerusalem.

*The people of the church in Jerusalem were commanded by an oracle given by revelation before the war to those in the city ... to depart and dwell in one of the cities of Perea which they called Pella.*¹

Sadly, many others in the surrounding regions fled **TO THE CITY** seeking protection within its walls. **Vespasian became Roman Emperor** and his son, **Titus**, marched to Jerusalem, in April of A.D. 70, 3 days before Passover began, the Romans began to besiege the city. **Josephus** describes the people as leaving the city "as swimmers deserting a sinking ship."

- After a 5 month siege, **Titus** and his Roman forces destroyed the city and the Temple, slaughtering priests and peasants alike. Josephus, the Jewish historian who was a part of the Roman siege, writes that **1.1 million were killed and 97,000 were taken prisoner** (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, 6.9.3).
- Many died from fighting the Romans beyond Jerusalem's walls, but **many more died from plague, famine, infighting, and suicide** before the Romans entered - even throwing dead bodies over the walls as there was no where to bury them.
- **Others tried to escape the city**. Josephus records that many who attempted to flee were caught whipped, tortured, and then crucified near the city walls - about 500 Jews each day!²

🕒 THIS...THIS is the **Great Tribulation** that Jesus was talking about.

FEET TO FAITH

- ▶ **Be prepared for persecution.** We KNOW that *we too will face persecution* - Paul says this will happen for anyone who wants to live Godly (2 Tim 3:12). Be ready for REJECTION even when you do what is RIGHT.
- ▶ **Be prepared for false teaching.** We also know that *there have been and will be FALSE MESSIAHS & FALSE PROPHETS*. We must know WHO Jesus really is and KNOW what Jesus really says.
- ▶ **Be prepared for Jesus to return.** We know that *a FUTURE JUDGMENT IS COMING*. Jesus WILL RETURN, but until He does, *we must be faithful to FOLLOW JESUS & SHARE JESUS with others*. Judgment IS coming for people in the future - a real judgment in hell.

¹ R. Kent Hughes, Luke: That You May Know the Truth, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 301.

² Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987).

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

* Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!

* Or call our **deacons & wives: Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Steve & Debbie Bass** (850-673-7952), **Noel & Patricia Barnes** (813-767-2881), **Tim & Joni Hughey** (850-464-1156), **Rob & Rebecca Leatherberry** (229-232-1087), or **Mark & Dot Mancil** (850-253-5405).

discussionquestions

Take some time to discuss these questions with your family, friends, or group.

1. Have you ever heard of “the great tribulation”? How is what you have learned *different* than what Jesus talked about in the Scriptures we covered today?
2. **Read Matthew 24:15-16 & Luke 21:20-21.** How does comparing Matthew’s Gospel (written for Jews) and Luke’s Gospel (written for Gentiles) help give us insight into what Jesus meant by ‘abomination of desolation’?
3. **Read Matthew 24:17-20.** Have you ever considered how this would affect 1st century Jews versus 21st century Gentiles? Why is it so important for us to consider the audience Jesus was speaking to before transplanting His warnings into our culture?
4. **Read Luke 19:41-44, 21:23-24, & 23:28-31.** How does reading these passages help give us more clarity to the fact that Jesus was talking about judgment coming to 1st century Jerusalem - not 21st century Jerusalem?
5. **Read Matthew 24:21-22.** So far, has there been any talk of a rapture of the Church before the “great tribulation/distress” in the Biblical text? Has there been any insight in the Biblical text to make us look beyond the 1st century audience yet? If not, then why do so many people dismiss the context and apply this language to something coming in OUR future?
6. **Read Matthew 10:23 & 24:23-28.** How would 1st century Jews know the difference between the coming of Jesus & the claims of the false messiahs/prophets? What kind of ‘coming’ was Jesus referring to - His 2nd coming or something different? How does this challenge your previous perspective on this passage regarding the “great tribulation” and the “coming of the Son of Man”?
7. Before today, have you ever heard about the significance of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70? If this IS a fulfillment of what Jesus said would happen (see Mt 24:1-3), why has there been so little focus on the historical fulfillment?
8. What does God want YOU to do with what we studied today? Consider looking back at our **FEET2FAITH** challenges.
9. How can we pray for/care for one another this week? (Pray for one another.)