

Matthew Chapter 24-25 – The Olivet Discourse – Part 10  
Matthew 24:15-22 – The Great Tribulation

**Review**

Matthew 24:4-31 is about the seven-year tribulation (Jacob's Trouble; Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week). Verses 4-14 are a general timeline for the entire seven years. Verse 15 steps back to the halfway point of the seven-year period and refers to the main prophetic sign of that time.

The abomination of desolation is fully explained in Daniel 9-12. This section informs the readers about what will happen in the last days between the prince that is to come (the king that does what he pleases, the false messiah, the man of lawlessness), unbelieving Israel (the many), and believing Israel (those who have insight, the Remnant).

- The false messiah set up a treaty with Israel for seven years (one set of seven).
- The false messiah will convince the Nation of Israel to turn to godlessness. But there will be some who will recognize what is happening. They are referred to as those who have insight, the Remnant.
- The Remnant will try to convince the many (Nation of Israel), that this false messiah is evil, but they will be betrayed by the many and some will be martyred.
- The false messiah will be confronted by ships from Kittim, and he will be enraged and violate the covenant halfway through the seven-year treaty.
- The false messiah will bring his people and invade Israel and Jerusalem; then they will set up the abomination of desolation.
- The abomination of desolation is signified by the false messiah who sets himself up as god; he is the epitome of an idolator, and he is an immoral person beyond all measure. He causes all to honor and worship him and will kill all those who oppose him. He will parcel out Israel and Jerusalem for a price.
- Some of the Remnant will fall into corruption, but the remaining part of the Remnant will either be martyred, or they will flee to the mountains to survive.
- This period of time will refine the Nation of Israel. The many will be destroyed, the fallen Remnant will be martyred, some of the Remnant will also be martyred, and there will be a portion of the Remnant that will survive until the Lord returns.
- The Remnant is told how long this period of great distress will be so they can endure until the end. Once they see the abomination of desolation, there will be 1290 days until the desolation is over. Then, there will be another 45 days until the true Messiah inaugurates His kingdom.
- The instruction to those who are in Judea at the time of the abomination of desolation is to flee, to run for the mountains, and God will supernaturally safeguard them for 3 and one-half years, probably in the current region of Petra, Bozrah in the Hebrew text.

**Matthew 24:15-22 – Why are you Running?**

The instruction to run is found in verses 15-20. The passage details who are to run, when they are to run, where they are to run, the urgency that they are to run, and the fact that the flight will be perilous. The next two verses will discuss why they must flee (Matthew 24:21-22).

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The Great Tribulation?

The first thing we want to observe is that Jesus does not refer to this time as “the Great Tribulation.” This is a term that has been coined, but nowhere is this term used as a title for this time in Matthew. Jesus is telling them what will happen.

In more recent times, theologians began changing the language from the Great Tribulation to the Tribulation, with only the last 3.5 years being called the Great Tribulation (Chart).

The Greek word for *tribulation* is “θλίψις thlipsis”

A situation, circumstance, or activity that causes distress – oppression, affliction, persecution. It can also refer to an internal emotional distress (2 Corinthians 2:4).

The verb “θλίβω thlibo” is used for an act of physical pressure to cause either pain or assuage a person from performing a mission.

The noun “θλίψις thlipsis,” at its base concept, is “pressure that causes distress.”

The term “θλίψις thlipsis” is used in several different ways in Scripture. It is used in a non-technical, non-eschatological sense in reference to any time of suffering or testing. It is so used in Matthew 13:21; Mark 4:17; John 16:33; Romans 5:3, 12:12; 2 Corinthians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; Revelation 1:9.

The phrase “great tribulation” (θλίψις μέγας thlipsis megas) is used here and in three other passages (Acts 7:11; Revelation 2:22, 7:14). If we translate this as distress or persecution, we have a more proper understanding of what is happening here.

What has emerged from this is a false belief that God named the 3.5-year period the Great Tribulation and refers to all the activity of that time.

The fact that the same word is used in verse 9 with an obvious connection to persecution cannot be ignored. But the verses here do make it seem that this “θλίψις thlipsis” goes beyond the persecution.

Is this period of time the great tribulation, or does it refer to the activity of a great persecution? The understanding of this phrase will help us understand why they must run.

The typical explanation of verses 21-22 (one that I have stated multiple times) is that after the abomination of desolation, God’s wrath will be poured out upon the earth in the form of trumpets and vials of wrath and that is why they must flee.

However, the Daniel reference does not refer to the wrath of God as what the Remnant will fear, but the wrath of the dragon (the beast) will be the source of their tribulation. If all we had was Matthew and the Hebrew Scriptures, how would we understand this tribulation/persecution?

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In Matthew specifically, there is no reference to the wrath of God as it is clear in Revelation. In Daniel 12:1 and Jeremiah 30:1-8, we see that the references are about the oppression and persecution of Israel, the Remnant.

There are some references to the wrath of God in the prophets (Joel 2:1-2, 11, 30-32), which may allude to the future revelation of God's wrath. But nothing suggests that the Remnant was to fear the wrath of God. They were to fear the prince who is to come and run because of the fury he would have for the Remnant and Israel. I am convinced that the term "great tribulation" used here and in Revelation 7:14 refers to the worldwide persecution of the Remnant, Gentile believers, and Israel.

Matthew 24:21-22

There will be - εἰμί eimi – Future Indicative. This is a prophecy of God that will take place. This great persecution will be unlike any other persecution that Israel has ever seen. In fact, this will not be compared to any genocide ever recorded.

The Holocaust will not be comparable to this great persecution. The Holocaust had its detractors, and people fought over the persecution of the Jews, and many nations stood up against this evil. During the time of Jacob's Trouble, there will be no national allies. The Remnant will be slaughtered from the East to the West. A close second will be Gentile believers. Israel will also suffer at the hands of the beast, but it is the wrath of God that will refine Israel down to the Remnant.

Verse 22 is normally thought of as God's wrath being so severe that unless he stayed His hand, then all life would die. However, this ignores the essence of Matthew 24. The phrase *all life* does point to all life in creation, meaning if God were to not shorten those days, then all life in creation would die.

Why?

God's existence is tied to Israel. If the great persecution were successful and the Remnant and all Jews were exterminated, then God would have failed and would cease to exist, and creation would also cease to exist. I believe this is the plan of Satan.

Jesus' intervention stops Satan in his advancement. The elect (the Remnant) is saved, and humanity is saved in the process as well.