

Sermon Title: THE GREAT TRIBULATION.

Text: Matt. 24:15 Read Daniel 9:21-27

Hymns:

Our subject this evening is the great tribulation. It is not just any tribulation but it is based on the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy.

This subject has fascinated God's people down through the years. It creates a mixture of curiosity and fear.

This is vital to our understanding of eschatology - the study of end times and the Lord's return.

This is one of those subjects where we need to be clear and yet it is a subject that to many is not clear. There has been a whole lot of newspaper preaching and a whole lot of ignoring the clear statements of the Bible.

We wonder how a set of theories can grow and grow out of hand.

Tonight we are going to play it very safely by staying close to the Bible statements and not the notions of men. We want to have a Biblical view of this statement by the Lord Jesus.

1. **The TERM "GREAT TRIBULATION"** Read [Matt. 24:21](#) A particular time. A unique time. There is none like it before or after.

How it is commonly understood

It is a common view that this is a period of time at the end of the world prior to Christ's return.

There are those who debate over the possibility of the church going through the Tribulation.

Some say that the church will be raptured before this great tribulation period.

There are independent churches who put so much emphasis on this that it is a fundamental of their church faith and practice.

Some have even gone out and started churches with the distinctive that the church will not go through the trib. Because the rapture of the church will come firstly.

I would like us to do some hard thinking about this and get to the bottom of this.

What we really must do is come to terms with the teaching of the Lord Jesus in this Olivetan ministry recorded in Matt. 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21.

Remember that the Lord is answering the disciples' twofold question.

"Tell us, when shall these things be [stones of temple thrown down] and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world?"

The problem is that the disciples acted like tourists who were taken with the majesty and glory of the temple of Jerusalem. They were impressed with the golden colour and the sheer size of the stones (some were up to 30 feet long] This all impressed them.

When the Lord said these stones shall be thrown down so that none are left remaining, they thought that would be the end of the world. They thought that Judaism would continue for ever until the end of the world and some even thought that Messiah would deliver them from the Romans by a military deliverance.

The disciples mixed these things up and rolled them into one, but the Lord was speaking of two separate events.

The local destruction of Jerusalem was based on the prophecy of Daniel.

The Lord referred to Daniel's 70th week **Daniel 9:24 & 25**

An understanding of Daniel's 70th week is all important to our eschatology.

If we read the words of the Lord carefully we will find them as the fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy. This is all about Jerusalem and its total desolation.

This will clarify a whole lot of things in our understanding of eschatology. We will be delivered from notions about the end times before Christ's return that are erroneously based on this passage. **We know from Revelation 20 that there will be tribulation in a general sense which will intensify when Satan will be loosed for a little season before the second coming of Christ.** Yet we cannot base our ideas of future tribulation on the teaching of the Lord that refer to the unique desolation of Jerusalem.

2. THE REASON FOR THIS GREAT TRIBULATION

Read **Matt 23:34 - 39**

It is the judgment of God for the blood of the prophets and the blood of God's Son.

"His blood be on us and our children" **Matt. 27:25** was the cry of the people outside Pilate's gate.

That was to bring a terrible judgment upon Jewry.

God would demonstrate that Israel as a nation was finished. That He would no more deal with Jews on the basis of O.T. theocratic worship centred on the temple. It would be left desolate - as a wilderness. *****

Because of their rejection of Christ and their hardness against the gospel call of Christ they were totally and finally rejected.

"Behold your house is left unto you desolate." **Matt. 23:38**

Those were the death knell words of the Saviour upon Judaism.
The Jews were warned of this in [Deut. 28:63-65](#)

3. THE TIME OF THIS GREAT TRIBULATION

Christ's teaching recorded in the gospels refer to a tribulation in that generation: not a tribulation that is still future.

[Luke 21:20](#) "and when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies then know that the desolation thereof is nigh."

The sure sign of this desolation was the appearance of an army to besiege the city.

[Luke 21:22](#) "these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled."

These are specific days when "all things which are written" have been fulfilled. There cannot be a further time of this intensity. It cannot be pushed into the future.

[Luke 21:32](#) "This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled."

There is only one way to interpret "this generation." It applied to people then alive. So the Lord's words spoken in AD 33 were fulfilled in the lives of people then present in AD 70

[Matt. 24:20](#) "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter neither on the Sabbath day." - this cannot apply to present or future times as this restriction of a Sabbath day's journey, has not been practiced by Jews for a long time.

The events of Jerusalem's desolation are specific to the prophecy of Daniel - the clearest of all the prophets regarding the destruction of Jerusalem. This was fulfilled when the armies of Rome under the leadership of Titus besieged the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70

[Matt. 24:15](#) "when ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand)."

As opposed to other views this great tribulation described by our Lord with a quotation from the prophet Daniel is about Jerusalem - the Holy City "Seventy weeks are determined upon *thy* people and upon *thy holy city*..." ([Dan. 9:24](#)).

Daniel's prophecy is not about the end of the world, nor the judgment of Gentiles. It relates to Jews - "Seventy weeks are determined upon *thy* people."

This is to interpret the 70th week of Daniel as the ministry, death, resurrection and exaltation of Christ and the generation who perished in Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It is applied to the same generation as of Christ.

The time frame of the 70 weeks (490 Years) is given in Daniel 9:25-27

Year 0 is from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.

(Could be the decree given to Nehemiah in the 20th year of Artaxerxes which was 454 BC. - notes by Albert Barnes on Daniel 9:25) "It has been said that man's free will flows in the channels which have been dug by the sovereignty of God. Such a concept is presented here. The Lord carries out His plans and protects His people, not merely in spite of a pagan king, but He actually uses that pagan king to work out His will."

Year 49 (7 weeks) to the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

Year 483 (62 weeks + 7 weeks = 69 weeks X 7 = 483 years) up to the anointing of the Messiah or Prince (According to Ussher and Hengstenberg's dating A.D. 29)

Year 486 (in the midst of the week [3 1/2 years of Christ's ministry from Baptism until His atoning death] Messiah is cut off for the people. At that point the sacrifice of the temple ends when Christ offered Himself as the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

After this point we place the prediction of Daniel: **"for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (Dan. 9:27).**

The Lord Jesus used the same expression, (although taken from the Greek Septuagint), **"the abomination of desolation"** when He warned His disciples of the approaching Roman armies against Jerusalem.

To turn this into a distant future event is to put an undetermined period of time between the 69th week and the 70th week - up to 2000 years – and growing by the day!

It is sound Bible interpretation and practical to make the 70th week follow in the normal succession of the 69 weeks. The statement, **"even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (Dan. 9:27)** is then seen to be the fall of Jerusalem 70 AD. By no means of Bible interpretation can it be made into a distant future event.

4. THE INTENSITY OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM DURING THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Text: **Mark 13:19**

Not the worst in number of deaths but in intensity of suffering. The greatest amount of death in any of God's judgments was Noah's flood. **The horror of this desolation of Jerusalem has been well described by Josephus who was a Jew in his annals of history for the Romans.**

- It was a five year period
- Before Jerusalem was besieged the towns of Judea were destroyed
- The siege took place at Passover when about 3,000,000 men were present
- Zealots sought insurrection and caused futile sedition.
- Famine caused wars within the walls in search of food. Mothers were guilty of eating their own children.. One group against another.
- Escapees from the siege - 500 per day were caught and crucified on crosses, until there was both no more room for crosses nor more crosses to be had. So several were crucified on one cross.
- The dead were not buried
- 1,100,000 died 97,000 were sold to become galley slaves or slaves in the mines of Egypt.

Quote from Josephus: (He wrote in AD 75, when this was fresh in his own mind and also fresh in the minds of the Jews)

"While the holy house was on fire everything was plundered that came to hand, and ten thousand of those were slain. Nor was there commiseration of any age, or any reverence or gravity; but children, old men, profane persons, and priests were all slain in the same manner. Moreover, many, when they saw the fire, exerted their utmost strength, and did break out into groans and outcries Perea also did return the echo, as well as the mountains round about Jerusalem, and augmented the force of the noise.

"Yet was the misery itself more terrible than this disorder. For one would have thought that the hill itself, on which the temple stood, was seething hot, as if full of fire on every part, that the blood was more in quantity than the fire, and that the slain were more in numbers than they who slew them. For the ground did nowhere appear visible because of the dead bodies that lay upon it." (VI 5.1)

"Now this vast multitude was indeed collected out of remote places, but the entire nation was now shut up by fate as in prison, and the Roman army encompassed the city when it was crowded with inhabitants, Accordingly the multitude of those that perished therein exceeded all the destructions that either men or God ever brought upon the world." (VI 9.4.)

THE SHORTENING OF THOSE DAYS was necessary Matt. 24:22

Titus would have destroyed the city by famine, but he was forced to enter the city with the sword due to the insurrection of the Jews within the city.

"It is related by Josephus (Jewish Wars, b. 1 chapter 12, section 1) that Titus at first resolved to reduce the city by famine. He therefore built a wall around it to keep any provisions from being carried in, and any of the people from going out. The Jews, however, drew up their army near the walls, engaged in battle, and the Romans pursued them, provoked by their attempts, and broke into the city. " _ Albert Barnes

Christians fled to Pella and the rocks of Petra - without pursuit.

Many Jews outside the city may have been believers who knew the truth of this prophecy and thereby escaped.

Such was the intensity and significance of this tribulation that it is worthy of God's providence in prophecy.

The Temple was totally razed to the ground by fire and the stones turned into heaps of rubble.

The wrath of Rome against the insensibilities of Judaism is legend and was used by God to bring Judaism to a complete end and from which that rebellious nation has never recovered.

5. LESSONS OF THIS GREAT TRIBULATION UPON JERUSALEM

- a. **We have here a proper understanding and reconciliation of Daniel's 70th week of tribulation and the great statements of the Lord Jesus.** We have the Lord's interpretation of their fulfilment.
- b. **We learn the accuracy of fulfilled prophecy** - this destruction of Jerusalem is already fulfilled. This builds our confidence on God's word about future prophecy
This is a warning to us that God fulfills His word and there will be an exact fulfilment of those things revealed about the return of Christ. If the Lord can decree the events that happened in Jerusalem moving heathen armies to fulfil His will then He has the wisdom and power to fulfil His word regarding the return of Christ.
- c. **Men are warned not to trample underfoot the blood of Christ. It is the unpardonable sin.** To reject the blood of Christ as your salvation and turn to other methods of religion is to seek judgment upon your soul.

This world that rejects Christ, the Son of God, is headed for judgement. We are called to surrender to the claims of Christ.

The Lord pleads with your soul to come unto Him for eternal life. He has called you as a chicken gathers her brood. See the pleading of the Lord with you soul. Luke 23:37.

I plead with you now as an ambassador of Christ.

There is no lack of will with the Lord to be your Saviour.

- d. **We learn that Jews can be saved.** For as they have been scattered across the world so the gospel shall be preached in every nation. Special agencies have been formed for their evangelisation. They are still the object of God's grace and can be grafted in again. But only through the same gospel. **Romans 11:26 "And SO" ... AND NOT OTHERWISE "...all Israel shall be saved."**